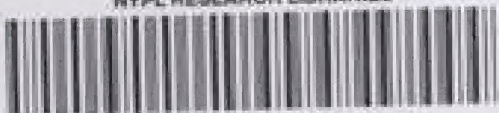
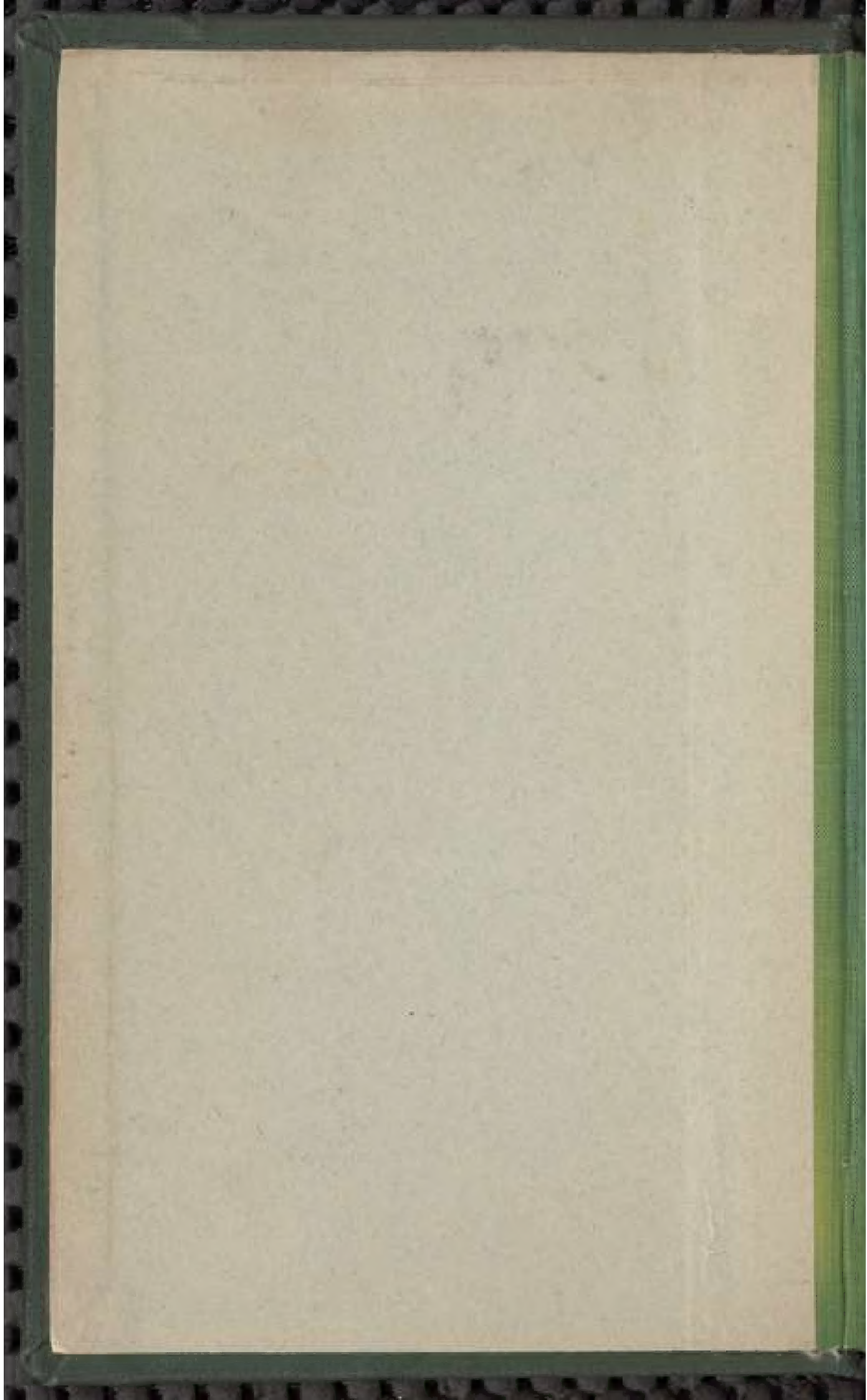


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Her Enemy, Some Friends— and Other Personages:

Stories and Studies Mostly of Human Hearts.

By

Edward Prime-Stevenson,

Author of "A Matter of Temperament"—"White Cockades"—
"Left To Themselves"—"You Will, Will You?"—"The Square
of Sevens"—"Red William's Wood"—etc., etc.

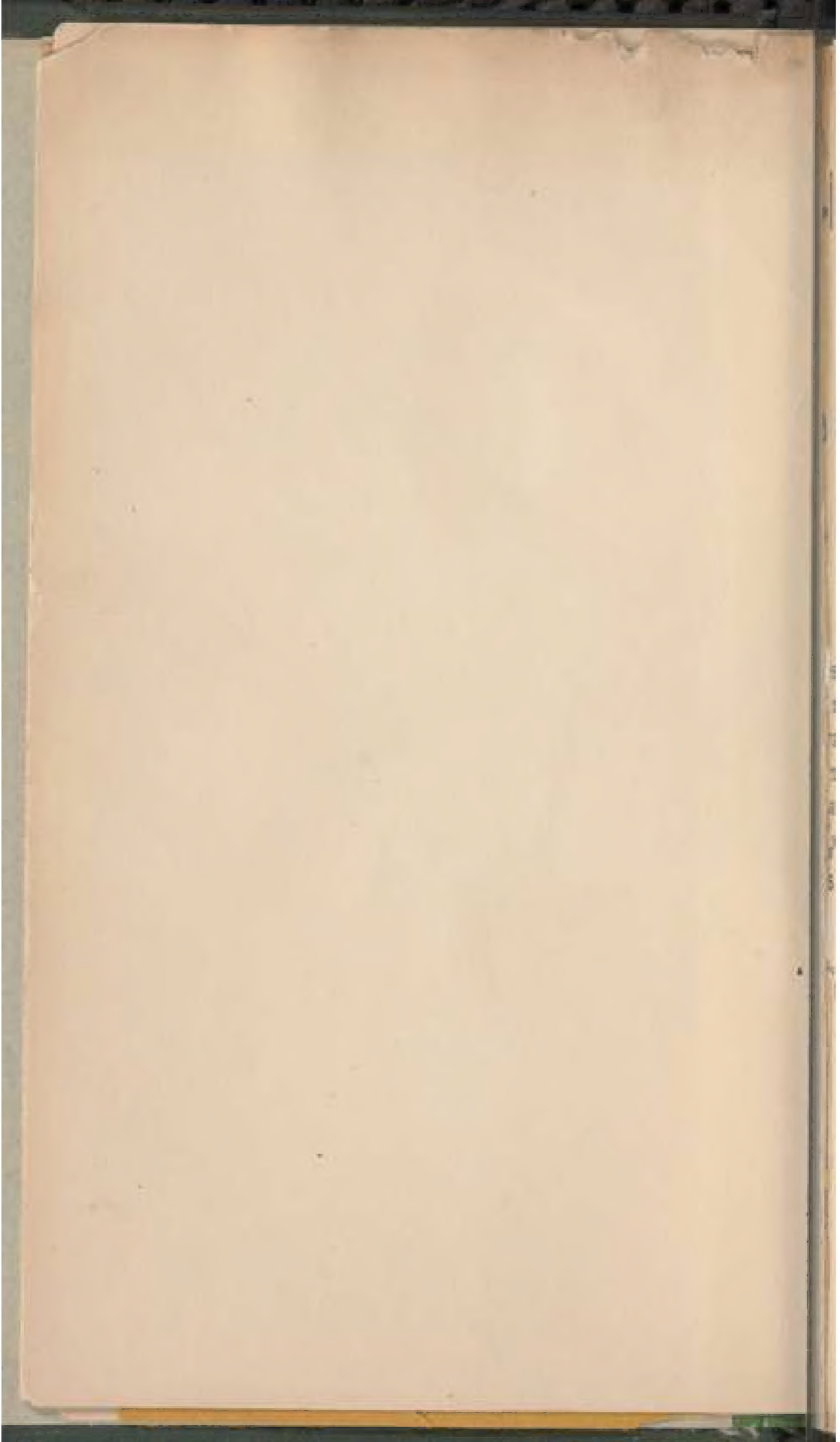


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1. Fiction (English)

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DUM



This book is privately printed, in an edition limited strictly to two hundred and fifty copies, each copy numbered and signed by the author; of which edition this copy is number **18**

Edward Prindle-212

P R E F A T O R Y

The authour of the sketches grouped in this volume must thank many editors and publishers who have aided in searching out, often at far-back dates, the matters which are so large a part of the collection. Acknowledgements also are due for permission to reprint what is not of first appearance here. Such indebtedness is special to Messrs. Harper & Brothers, to Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, to "The Outlook Company" and to "The Independent," all of New York; to Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Company, and to Messrs. De Wolfe, Fiske & Company, both of Boston; to the J. B. Lippincott Company, of Philadelphia; to Messrs. Cassell & Co., Ltd., of London; and collectively, but not less gratefully, to other sources.

A serious difficulty, during the long process of printing the book, has arisen by putting it through press in a country to which the language of each line is foreign, when there is question of printing a volume. English is an idiom likely to be peculiarly troublesome to even the most attentive and best-qualified Italian compositors. To Mr. Rinaldo Gosner, the Florentine firm concerned with these pages, owe a great many thanks, for his unlimited care and patience, in every detail referring itself to him and to his typographers.

Again, in the way of press-work, an unexpected-long absence from Italy has necessitated the slow process, never too sure, of proof-correcting solely

by post; and, though an authour should not be his only proof-reader, the greater part of this book was luckily could not have more sharp-sighted revision. For some occasional help in the proof-reading than are due, with regrets that such aid could not be much more frequent; since many typographical slips escaped the vigilance of any eyes concerned, until too late for being put to rights. They are not to be charged to any negligence, unless my own. Only persons who have had occasion to materialize a volume of some length, under like circumstances, can measure the patience and pains involved.

So little in the series is new, that to particularize such fraction is hardly worth while. In some instances however, retouching of the earlier text has seemed desirable, as also variations from the original titles. Harmony of keys and moods has not been possible in a collection so arbitrarily bundled together, though a few sketches of an accent more obviously spiritual—thus including "Weed and Flower," "Unbidden," "Prisoner Poses" and "Elek's Religion," in which narrative purpose is quite secondary—are grouped toward the end of the volume. Perhaps variety can make amends for so many summary contrasts. In any case, it is hoped that the reader will not lay by the series, when read, feeling that, like another Ezekiel, he has been making a descent into a Valley of Dry Bones; but one where, unfortunately, a miracle has been forthcoming, to reward the tourist for his sober excursion.

E. P.-S.

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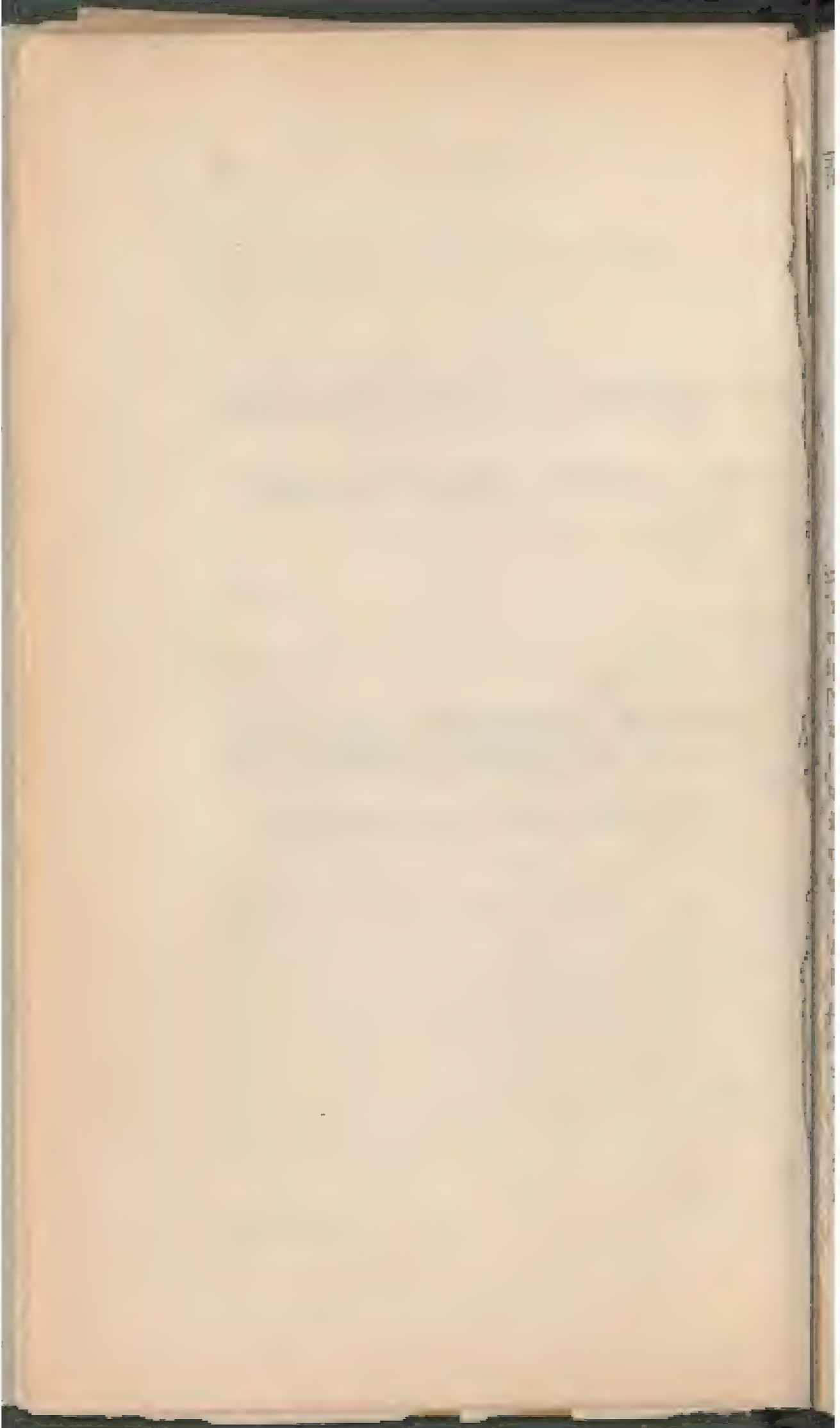
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HER ENEMY, SOME FRIENDS —AND OTHER PERSONAGES.

*"That divine, prophetic triad — Life, Love,
Path! — benediction threefold and supreme to the
world."*

Xavier Mayne :—"Imre : A Memorandum."



(TO Mrs. FREDERIC JENNINGS-PARSONS)

HER ENEMY.

... " AND YOU ALL KNOW SECURITY
IS MORTAL'S CHIEFEST ENEMY. " ... (*Macbeth*.)

THERE are few more picturesque roads in all Scrope County than the one by Van Blarcom's Mills. The Mills represent a detail in the rural landscape prominent enough to give the highway a name of dignity—as people think in that part of the State. The road itself is a perfect road for horseback riding, for driving or for motoring. So the residents of a dozen country-seats along it will assure you enthusiastically if you want the information—or not. Shady, level, winding about among substantial farms with neat, unpretentious dwellings—carrying you past the lawns and gates of those new "places" which City-edifiers have created—Van Blarcom's Mills Road shows you thus, one by one, the beauties of its secluded region—each summer importing thereto more fashion and landscape-gardening. Presently you will find your route giving in, with a graceful defiance, to the Whitestone River's sinuous vagaries. When the track goes climbing, as if with merely a lazy recognition of necessity, three or four long hills of easy grades—hills which as early as September blaze with scarlet and yellow foliage.

The summit of the third hill from the Mills and

from the tasteful little railroad-station, offers a double interest to the eye. The spot is in itself almost an arcade of old walnut-trees that lean across the highway. They diffuse a sense of greenness, of coolness and of lonely elevation about the height; and at the same time is permitted you such a wide and harmonious view of broad stretches of country as rarely fails to lure an exclamation from new-comers. This, in fact, is the crowning point of the Van Blarcom's Mills Road, in more than one sense. It is as if it turned upon the passer triumphantly, in mock-modesty and in an access of contempt for all the rest of the township at least, declaring, "There now! What do you say to *this*? I am Van Blarcom's Mills Road!"

On a certain early September afternoon, at four o'clock, this same locality possessed a special element of attractiveness. Young Mrs. Mordaunt Windsor, in her best-fitting riding-habit and mounted on her beloved—if often fidgetty—mare, Fricka, came slowly over the top of the hill. The lady walked Fricka down under the shady walnut archway. She admired for the fiftieth time the luminous, late-afternoon prospect of the valley: and, last of all, with that impulsiveness now and then characterizing Mrs. Mordaunt Windsor, she alighted from Fricka and proceeded quickly to tether that lively animal to a stout fence-rail. Next, gathering up her riding-skirt, Mrs. Windsor scrambled briskly over a low stone wall, on the other side of the road. She sauntered a few yards within a green, undisturbed bit of pasture. Greyish boulders shouldered their way up through the earth. The edge of a shy pond and a coppice were discernible afar, at the lower slope. Mrs. Windsor

sat down on a rock, pulling off her hat. She leaned forward with her chin on her slender hands—like a tired school-girl. No carriages were likely to pass that way at this hour. It was pleasant to stare straight out before her, across the road and succeeding fields, and so on over the wide valley, in meditative ecstasy. All was so beautiful, so cool, so silent up there, this autumn afternoon. Mordaunt would not be home for two hours yet. The servants were reliable as to dinner.

Somehow young Mrs. Windsor felt like extracting all enjoyments of that excursion. She had taken a long ride. Perhaps it would not have seemed so long so lonely—now that she thought it over—if Mordaunt had come up from the City early, as he commonly did twice a month, to gallop off with her. But Mordaunt was obliged to leave her to her own social devices a good deal this summer; even lately submitting her to the hardship of a solitary dinner, on sundry nights in the week. Mr. Payton, his partner, was away in bad health. Solitude was part of the penalty of an abode, from June till October, in a place nearly two hours from New York. But then she really did not mind it so much. Her life before her wedding-day certainly hadn't been so cheered with companionship, nor so dependent on the affection of any man or woman, that to be alone in these bright days was a grievance of which she had a right to complain.

Complain! Heavens! What a life it had been till the fatadic month, when she had met Mordaunt at Jean Bond's place, in Newport!—and almost before she knew it, still fresh from her school as she was

had found that somehow the man she so vividly had admired from the first night she beheld him, loved her!—that they two were to be married in New York before the frost should come! All the world and her fate seemed altered inexpressibly for evermore!

Mrs. Windsor shifted her pretty figure into a more restful pose. Fricka was in a quiescent mood; perhaps was not oblivious to the sentimental beauties of the bright, serene landscape. A gentle lassitude, the charm of these moments of isolation, the panorama that vaguely suggested an emotional or a biographical overlook, possibly some more potent influences, all stole into the young wife's heart. Far off, in the valley, by tracing the roadway's windings, she could discern the chimneys of "The Wyke"—their delightful summer-home. Hers and Mordaunt's—no, hers only indeed! For had not Mordaunt given it to her, with the aid of much apparently foolish legal formality, the summer before this?—when he had bought it, and they had come out, to assume the dignity of residents and landowners in the county!

"I want you to keep 'The Wyke' always, as your very own," Mordaunt said; "you can take it as a kind of supplementary wedding-gift."

What fun it had been, their furnishing and fitting it! The planning and building of the new stables, the changes in the grounds that somebody else had laid out so stupidly, the settling-down to the villeggiatura-existence together—she and Mordaunt! Yes—she was not sure but that she *did* care a little more for "The Wyke" because it was now "her very own", given by Mordaunt, more than for a pretty town-house in Seventy-fourth Street. Beside

there was nothing to compare with summer-life for two people like Mordaunt and herself! If only there were not all those neighbours on whom they must call, and by whom they must be invaded, it would be simply idyllic!

"There! We *must* go to General Hoxie's to-morrow night, if I can induce him to stir!" she exclaimed ruefully. "And perhaps if he don't object very strenuously, I can get him over to the Kerr's too, and so we can kill two birds with one stone."

A thrush on the tree beneath which Fricka was tied began singing louder. With clearer thrills and sweeter warblings rose its shrill roulades, as if the glory of the day's end had thrilled the little creature into a perfect fever of joy and melody. Well, thank God, she need not envy the happiness of a bird! If there was any living creature in the world serenely, gratefully happy—and she thought that "Thank God!" with the simplicity of a child—it was herself, Alice Windsor. It was true that life is ever a terrific uncertainty. Oh, yes! But outside of some sudden assault on her and Mordaunt's happiness, which a real casualty might make, apart from some now undreamed disease or from his death—her own death—why, what a tranquil continuance of the present the *con*ire seemed to promise! Young—of course they *any*uld be forced to lose that gem in their casket, but *day* so very soon—each rich, each daily more centered *con* each other as the great facts that made life wonderful and beautiful, each with 'hosts of friends'—*till* all, there wasn't a cloud in their sky any more *jea* in there was one in all that lucent atmosphere *she*athed-in from the top of Taylor's Hill that afternoon.

Yes, she thanked God—"for all the goodness and loving-kindness"—for "all the blessings of this life," which seemed to radiate about her and Mordaunt. Young Mrs. Windsor was not a particularly pious woman. But she was, what is better, a good woman. Though she and Mordaunt did not go to church every Sunday, why, when they did go, she generally found herself occupied with more appropriate reflections than those analytic of hats and wraps round about her.

It was wonderful how it had all come!—thought pretty Mrs. Alice. There had been little outlook into such a life for her, during her long years at boarding-schools, in which she was chiefly busy with two things—learning her tasks, and wondering why other girls possessed fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, but she none. She was exceedingly rich. Some of the girls envied her riches and her frocks. She had not cared much about frocks, except as conveniences. The jealous, spiteful look in Harriet Sargent's eyes, when warm "spring weather" evoked boxes from Mrs. Lefferts (her guardian's wife) in New York, she had never been quite able to understand. But then Harriet Sargent seemed always an odd girl, in spite of one's friendliness with her for a term or so, as a room-mate. As to Alice's vacations? Six or seven had dragged along, alas!—there in the school, with one or two "resident teachers". Then the Leffertses and their daughter discovered that four persons could travel more pleasantly (and in theory less expensively) than three. Mr. Lefferts's ward being at once rich, generous and inoffensive, they had "invited" her to

spend certain summers in Europe with them. Alice rather liked Mrs. Lefferts and Ada. Her guardian was a kind-hearted, polite sort of a man—an old friend of her father. But somehow Europe was only like wandering through a big picture-gallery on an idle morning, with acquaintances one rather fancied but would quite as soon quit in any corridor. Alice had "seen" Europe, but not particularly had she enjoyed the seeing.

No, there was no mistake about it! Her *life*, her happiness, her destiny all had come to her with that summer in Newport at the Bond's—her meeting Mordaunt. Oh, if she had *not* gone there!... The idea chilled her heart. She had not cared to go when the invitation came—Jean Bond concluding it, in her usual tyrannically kind fashion, "Now, you dear little thing you, don't you *dare* to say you can't come! You've been knocking around lonely, poky places in this country and Europe long enough, with a lot of people you don't care a pin for. I haven't seen you for a week since graduation-day. Your room is ready this minute. Not one civil word will you get from yours truly, unless you swear to stay three months! Decline if you dare!"

Would she or Mordaunt ever forget that still Sunday afternoon, down among the rocks, after five or six weeks of the hospitable (and indefatigable) Jean Bond's programme? For then had they both discovered that Jean had not calculated on the greatest detail of it. There came indeed a glory to the earth that day, a light truly broke upon it—for Alice—that 'never was on sea or land.'

"I have been a pretty hard, bad sort of a lot,"

Mordaunt Windsor had said, taking her hand. "But you see, till now I never knew any girl like you. You can do anything with me, Alice!... If you throw me over, I shall go to the devil... I know, oh, I know I am not fit that you should give yourself to me. My enemies, even my friends, will say that you oughtn't to believe a word I say, this minute. But if you will trust me—well, as God lives, Alice, I will become a new man! Will you trust me?"

She had looked at him bewildered with joy. In this retrospect, came back that wonderful, exalted, joyful expression in her hazel eyes as she answered him:

"Yes. I—I—cannot help trusting you. I will never believe anything evil of you. Never! For—I love you. All the world is like another place since I met you."

Two weeks later Mordaunt told her how he had knocked a man down in a friend's billiard-room, for an insult that Mordaunt and she had scornfully admitted might be much whispered behind their backs: "So Windsor's going to marry that plain little Miss Smith, for her money, is he? Mordaunt's got well to the end of his tether when he decides to settle down to *one* girl—and to a respectable girl, from all I hear." Thereupon did the billiard-cue descend upon the surprised speaker's head, Mordaunt Windsor entering the door unexpectedly.

"And there will be people who will say that to the end of time! It makes me sick to think of it!" Mordaunt exclaimed in telling Alice the incident correctly, a garbled version having reached the Bonds' ears.

"Let people say it to the end of time, for all I care!" Alice had answered, laughing a trifle nervously.

"You and I know it isn't true."

A more important lie soon had given them greater vexation. It had started in Newport, the very week in which their engagement was announced. Fortunately or unfortunately, it had traveled slowly to the young fiancée. For this new annoyance no less a person than her old schoolmate, Harriet Sargent, seemed to be the most responsible party. It was a story to the effect that he, Mordaunt Windsor, had been engaged to her, Harriet Sargent, before his interest in little Miss Smith had culminated! Harriet Sargent, by the by, had matured into a notoriously dashing girl, moving in an eminently rapid, "talked-about" set; one taking and enjoying every privilege of its peculiar atmosphere. Gossip asserted now, whether with aid of Miss Harriet or not, that Mordaunt had been betrothed to her. The engagement had been "a set matter"—at a period and for a length of time not defined; but probably "fixed during a recent winter in New York." Certainly Mordaunt once had been intimate enough with Harriet and with Harriet's clique, and perceptibly attentive to the beautiful Creole, but in no way that discerning persons would count as looking to matrimony! No indeed! Mordaunt made a grave, clear explanation to Alice? She understood how he "had been placed." It was a history of absolute trifles, as plain as day! Alice was as annoyed at it, as was Mordaunt. Harriet, too, seemed infinitely bored now,—refusing (owing to what she called "my own funny little reasons") to discuss the gossip.

"No, I do *not* intend to talk about that subject!" quoth Harriet, smiling mystically on a friend one even-

ing, as they were drinking some uncommonly good champagne-punch, at a hunt-ball. "Let you folks say just what you like about Mr. Windsor and myself! It's simply nothing to me now-a-days. He *is* engaged to Alice Smith—is he?... I'm delighted he's going to be married—going to reform all his naughty, nice little ways. My good Lord, just fasten that bracelet a little tighter Tom!—no, more above the elbow!"

Harriet Sargent was one old schoolmate not invited to Alice's wedding, when it came off. Furthermore, Alice did not so much as leave a card on her, nor waste two looks on Harriet, when they had returned to New York, and occasionally touched in orbits.

"I'd rather you didn't call," said Mordaunt reflectively. "Harriet Sargent's not your style of woman at all. She's handsome enough, in a way, but not—too good. Besides, she and that crowd she's with are really a scandal for the papers."

"I certainly shouldn't call, even if you did," Alice replied gently but decidedly.

"Did what?" he asked, flushing.

"Wanted me to call," she replied.

"Oh, I see. Well, I certainly don't want you to call on Harriet," he returned conclusively.

As if in final disposition of Harriet Sargent, Harriet presently married one Mr. Thomas Roe Jacobus, a thoroughly appropriate match. Mr Jacobus was a young-mannered, elderly, wealthy man; a *divorcé* under unpromising circumstances for the welfare of his next partner. Alice did not think of Harriet with much hostility—she wished Mrs. Jacobus happiness—the world was wide enough for them both!

The bird still sang. The afternoon was not yet

less bright during the hour that Mrs. Windsor had enjoyed. Happy thought is a rapid occupation. But it was really absurd to sit there alone by herself, even with all those joyful reveries. Fricka long ago had inquired into the compactness of the soil under her hoofs, and the nature of the knot whereby she was tied. She must be remounted and made to go home at a smart pace. Mordaunt would come up on the express, after his long week in New York. ...But the air was so pure and clear!—the sun and shadow-flecked vista were so picturesque! Mrs. Windsor hated to bestir herself. So she continued thought. Her life, her own heart, Mordaunt's absorption in her, that change in himself which her influences had wrought, all this meant durable happiness. For there also had come an admirable awakening of finer character in a man who before his marriage had been rather worse than the average selfish, ill-regulated man about-town. Mordaunt's natural gift for business had matured. High qualities in him had developed. This too Alice rejoiced in, just as the world outspread before her calm eyes seemed to rejoice, in this hour of sunniness and far-reaching peacefulness.... Ah, the train must be rushing along this minute, bringing Mordaunt nearer and nearer. Poor fellow! He might well be tired after such a busy summer! Great, very great things had been done by "Payton and Mordaunt" in course of it. Her husband was no longer her inferior in fortune. He was now a man of wealth—of large wealth—independent of his interests in "Payton and Mordaunt." He proposed to retire soon from all duty requiring personal care. Then they would go to Europe for a while; then return to New York,

and to "The Wyke's" summer loveliness. And so would stretch out for them, Heaven willing, year after year of tranquil happiness, each year beautiful as this day! Oh, it was good to live! God be praised for life!

Mrs. Windsor started up. In defiance of sentimental conduct, it must be admitted that she stretched herself, though not ungracefully. She shook out her habit, straightened her hat and stepped from the rock. As she did so, she dropped her handkerchief. A folded paper, much crumpled, fell from it. She recognized the little leaflet she had hastily torn from the calendar fastened above her secretary, in the boudoir at "The Wyke". Too hurried to read it before dropping it into a be-ribboned basket across the room, she had borne it unread along with her. She stopped and picked it now up, and smoothed its wrinkled surface. Ah, she had torn off not only yesterday's oracle, but to-day's!

The calendar in question presented days and dates. Along with them were the sorts of literary embellishments common in such monitors; a "quotation for every day in the year"—in this case often in french. Along with that, Mrs. Windsor's calendar offered now and then a musical reference,—a citation from the score of some well-known symphony or opera, or a bit of a pianoforte sonata, or a song—in many cases this musical extract taking the place of a literary one. The musical fragments in question were well-chosen; and while the bits of literature extended themselves to many writers, composers of all nationalities were also drawn on. This musical variety would be of interest to the calendar's owner, in proportion to his or her knowledge of good music, exactly as of good literature.

Mrs. Windsor glanced at yesterday's slip. Then she laughed. There was the day and date, and this:

*"Nie sollst du mich befragen,
Noch Wissens Sorge tragen...."*

The warning to the luckless Elsa in "Lohengrin" — to that Elsa of Brabant whom in her unmarried and "sentimental" days Alice had often been disposed more to blame than to pity. Well, well! The monition might be taken by any woman, first, as a warning to hold curiosity in check everlastingly; and, second, by any wife not to try to know too much of her husband's past, not to try to know his present too well—not to believe, forsooth, that she really *knew* him!

Stuff! Not in that category of wives was she! There were no secrets in Mordaunt's past or present worth her knowing! There were no mysteries in Mordaunt to say anything now to a wife! There was nothing as to which it was worth while questioning Mordaunt, nor that she need hesitate to put to question! That verb "*befragen*," she need not conjugate in any mood or tense. Mordaunt had never been exactly a Lohengrin nor an Arthur nor a Bayard. But such as he had been and was, she knew him. She knew him, as well as she knew his name was her own! "*Nie sollst du mich befragen*," indeed! That bit of Wagner was thrown away on *her*!

With the smile still on her lips, in a charming contempt, Mrs. Alice threw away the calendar's musical leaflet of yesterday, and proceeded to make acquaintance with the one for to-day. Ah, a short literary message! She read it hastily. Then she frowned. She read it again. It was anonymous. It ran: —

"Credit no woman. Believe in no man. Trust

nothing that you hear—and only half of what you see. And so—benedicite ! ”

Mrs. Windsor started, as if the wasp darting near her face, had stung her! Hatelul Chance—in such an hour of calm and golden retrospect and prospect!—heartless Chance dared to throw into her face, her soul, this flippant, bitter pessimism!—one irritating her somehow vastly more than the Wagnerian bit of musical impertinence! This was biting-in, as it were, an insult, a threat! First the music, then this, more heartless and mal-à-propos! The more she thought of it, the stronger she resented it with an anger of which she was scarcely conscious. But the coincidence struck her strongly. All her nature jarred. Who was the miserable mortal whose perversity had suffered him to record that short, black “*non credo*” of a social creed? *She* could give the lie to it! So could thousands of other women, to a thousand wretched adherents to it! *She* could, if ever a human being could! She would like to begin then and there, proclaiming contradictions from the top of this hill, as an evangel of trust and joy to the world below. If any sane young wives liked to believe such a cruel, needless warning, shame to them! Her past, her present, Mordaunt’s and her daily existence—their perfect community of thought and life—their perfect love and trust—her faith in Mordaunt, her reserved, strong-natured husband!... Nothing could shake it all nor cloud a knowledge of Mordaunt so thorough that the future could add little of significance. All was flat refutation to the blasphemy the torn leaflets flaunted before her eyes. And she, Alice Windsor, was only one woman, among tens of thousands of happy wives

in that kindly summer world, glad to despise the malice of such cynical suggestions !

Mrs. Windsor tore the last leaflet into shreds with an angry gesture. The bird, in startled interruption, ceased its song and darted away. Alice came quickly back to Fieka. She mounted, with a frown still disturbing her young face. She set out down the hill, at a determined trot, and took a short cut for "The Wyke."



She came down stairs into the open drawing-room. She wore a new gown that Mordaunt liked. All was dark outside. The train was in. Mordaunt doubtless was hurrying up the road, in the trap. The clear evening was unexpectedly chilly. Since sun-setting a raw wind had soughed about "The Wyke". Alice stirred the wood-fire and looked at the clock. She glanced across the wide hall to the dining-room, where the man was laying the table. Moments passed. Why did not Mordaunt come ? Then she heard the trap. She walked quickly to the hall.

She never remembered distinctly anything that she did, from the moment that she saw that Mordaunt was not in the vehicle. The groom was alone. He came in, and handed her the evening mail. In it was a letter for her, in Mordaunt's handwriting. In sudden disappointment she seized it, expecting that he wrote by the last post, to say that could not leave town until next day. She opened the letter, returning to the drawing-room. What Mordaunt had written her was this :

" Dear Alice :

I give you my word that I do not know how to

say to you what I must. I have tried to write you about it during a fortnight—I have torn up letter after letter. It would be no good to tell you a lie nor much of the true story in question. I should have to begin it with a time before you and I were married, and to include in it a good deal of time since. I am going to Europe—with Harriet Jacobus—to *stay*. Her affairs have got to a crisis. There is nothing else for her but this. Also for me, all things considered. It would be impossible to keep from you much longer certain facts that too many other people know. I am very sorry, but I do what I do now, with my eyes quite open. I ought not to have deceived you. It seemed wholly impossible that Harriet and I could ever again have a word to say to each other. Lately matters have brought us together. There are some emotions too strong for duty, as I have found out this autumn. I do not ask you to forgive me. I expect, too, you have really never known the true *me* to forgive. I have tried to play a pretty decent part, a good while. What is more, I have played it trying to like it, and sometimes fancying it was my original part in life, after all. I could not act now, even if I wished to do so. You do not believe that, I suppose? You will not need to hear from me again. We shall have sailed by the time this letter is posted. My leaving you, and my future movements abroad will make no difference of importance in your affairs, financial or other. Sparkill and Hay, to whom I have written, will see your attorneys just as soon as you choose. Sparkill and Hay will not make any defense. You may file the petition on any grounds; of course desertion will suffice. But (if you prefer) you can have your proof of

other aspects by sending your attorney to No. 44 West—th Street. The apartment on the fourth floor has been leased by me since June. Good-by. Forget me, and be happy again soon as you can.

Mordaunt.

P. S. Somehow I cannot help myself. I am glad you have known nothing, though of course it makes this more unexpected for you."

She read this communication twice or thrice, in a dazed way, taking in at last all the duplex life and the weak, false, male nature that it intimated. Then she sat down on the nearest chair, and closed her eyes without even one cry. Mrs. Mellon, the housekeeper, was passing through the hall. So Mrs. Windsor was brought out of her half-swoon and put to bed. The doctor—fortunately a discreet and sympathetic friend—telegraphed the same evening for the lawyers to come up to "The Wyke" next day, to make arrangements for the divorce.

(TO GÉRARD-HENRI VUERCHOZ)

"AQUAE MULTAE NON—"

"THE FRIENDSHIP WHICH IS LOVE,
THE LOVE WHICH IS FRIENDSHIP"...

(Xavier Mayne: "*Inre: A Memorandum*")

"BLESSED San Petronio!" exclaimed Father Sebastiano, looking down amiably at the crowd of lively saunterers and merrymakers about the booths in the Piazza—"Blessed San Petronio! But it is good surely to see folks enjoy themselves in a worldly way—when they can honor religion by it!"

It was the day of the very-elect saint named by Father Sebastian. It was occurring in Bologna in 1682. The world had not mixed piety and pleasure, aristocratic or vulgar, quite as far as somehow we find the process perfected in our time. But it had made very comfortable advances. Leaning both elbows upon the window-sill, the monastery's organist surveyed and approved. The sun was flaring down the west. The last of the daylight's distractions were at their height. The final frolicking, promenading and visiting would be forthcoming, after evening should really begin. Garlands and streamers flaunted in the ruddy glow. Thousands of small lights would be set atwinkling, along with the bonfires presently. Blessed Saint Petronio, indeed!

"Yes, it is an excellent thing that saints and saints-days were invented, I think," continued Father

Sebastiano to himself, a little slyly. "If I were the Holy Father, I think I would squeeze even a few more into the calendar—if one could. A handsome collection this morning! It will more than settle those refectory-accounts that the visit of his Eminence made so large. There! That reminds me—I wonder whether Madriale has copied all the mass Monsignore was so obliging as to lend to my library? Aha! I wager that Madriale is the only person in this city who is busy at work on this holiday! By San Petronio! Does not life seem long enough to that young man? He never gives himself one afternoon's rest from our eternal music!"

Apparently life did not indeed seem so long to the subject of Father Sebastiano's query. Up on the fourth floor of a huge dwelling, just around the corner of the monastery, at that moment was seated before a harpsichord, "that young man" in question—Felice Madriale. In so far as writing music was work to him, Felice really had been working all that holiday long, contentedly and diligently. Indeed he had hardly moved from his chair since morning. What little transcribing he had left to do—he was copying, though not copying the mass that Monsignore had lent to Father Sebastiano he wished quite done before that day's light failed. Felice did not lift his head from his pages. The notes were jotted down swiftly, precisely, according to a rough draft before him. The pages glided from the hand to the floor, with wonderful speed. Felice's blue eyes were full of a strange light. Now and then his parted lips hummed a phrase. Madriale's blond hair, (a saxon trait derived from a saxon mother) was thrown back

in waves almost luminous, from his fair forehead. He might have been studied, in these moments of preoccupation, for a fanciful picture of some young evangelist of music—one whose revelation outsped his eager hand. But it would never have occurred to Madriale to be vain of his beauty any more than to feel vanity in his talents. He would probably have declined posing for a musical celestial, and would have doubted the worth of the materials for even a worldly picture to be composed out of his charming personality—with the dash of sun on the wall beside him, tinting the white sheets of his manuscript, the warm old red-tiled floor, the brass and oak of the carved chest beside him. But such a picture would have sold.

All at once Madriale gave a sigh of relief, drew some double measures with a dash and dropped his pen. He had finished a motet—the longest bit of work from his own head that he had found leisure yet to put on paper.

From without came the distant murmur of the holiday-making city, up, up to the cool, remote room. Madriale laid his head against the tall chair. Little waves of vague melody still surged through his brain.

Young Madriale was not of Bologna. An orphan, educated in music through the charity of a relative now dead, he had turned his back on the South to earn his living elsewhere. Arrived, in Bologna, chiefly after tedious wanderings, Father Sebastiano had found work to keep Felice busy ever since Easter. In the same tall house he had come into on arriving, he had abided, in much satisfaction. It was a singularly quiet existence. Felice delighted in it. He had his work, his thoughts, his art, his

acquaintanceships with the old priests in San Liberato, San Petronio and other convents; and a very few lay-acquaintances. His task was ever a companion. More than these Madriale had with him—by happiest fortune, as he daily thought—the fellow-lodger he would choose out of all the world! That companion was his best and oldest friend—Illario Pretola. Having occupation and Illario, really the world could not present much else of great consideration to Madriale! For, Felice was one of the men born to passional friendship, as other men are born lovers of other sorts. The type has not ceased to exist with Felice, any more than it began with him. Only the world of men of our epoch affects to have neither time nor heart nor respect nor even senses for it — at least not in frank expression.

The door was flung open. A man strolled from the dark little passage into the golden room, whistling a lively air. The reposeful genre-picture was disturbed.

"Upon my word! Still hard at it!" was Illario Pretola's reproving greeting. The speaker's voice was singularly beautiful; but it often reproved and mocked many beautiful things. Somehow, Felice never particularly remarked that fact. "The idea of a well young man sitting and scratching, scratching, this whole livelong holiday! *Che diavole!* It is a sin, the sin of irreligion, my dear boy! You will work yourself into the gate of Paradise—or the other place—before they want you there, unless you learn to be lazy. Work! Oh, I fear, I detest work!"

"But I have done no copying to-day," replied Madriale, amiably.

"In the name of all the blessed, what then has so absorbed you?" demanded Ilario laughing. "I try to stir you up after breakfast. But no, you will have no procession! Pretty girls may go to the devil, for all you care! I come after you at noon, and it is—'My dear Ilario, amuse yourself as you will, but do leave me in peace!' So I leave you in peace. Now I return, and there you sit, with the ink scarcely dry upon your pen, I see. And you are not starving! Come now! For what are you killing yourself, and driving me out of doors, to be gay alone by myself?"

Ilario looked down into Felice's face with a serio-comic frown. Himself had watched processions, had chaffed many fair damsels of Bologna, had eaten and drunk and danced to his heart's content. It was now time for some dullness and irritation. He sat down on the stone window-ledge, waiting his friend's reply.

"It means that I have been keeping a very little secret from you," responded Madriale smiling.

"Which you do not intend to keep any longer," Pretola interrupted. "You choose wisely my little one! Therefore acquaint me with the weighty secret, as soon as possible."

Felice was two and twenty. Ilario was nearly thirty. But Felice had always been 'my little one' to the other.

"First of all then, in leisure moments that work has vouchsafed me, I have composed—this." He lifted the manuscript and laid it on the harpsichord.

"What is it?"

"A motet. Completed, every measure of it."

"A motet? So you have been really making

music,—not copying it only?" replied Ilario. "And you do not think you have wasted your time into the bargain! Let us hope not! That is your motet, is it? For how many voices?"

"That is it. I have finished the copy just this instant. You or I will have small chance of hearing it very speedily; so pray cast an eye over it. It is in rather more the new style—many of our worthy patrons here in Bologna will have no good opinion of such writing, you may be sure. They will think it quite too free."

With a fine air of kindly superiority and interest, Ilario came to the harpsichord. Madriale watched his coming with a mounting color and brightening eye. When Ilario stood beside him, turning over the neat pages with more attentive consideration than his ironical words had betokened, Felice drew his friend's hand in his own and held it. It was easy to see how extremely fond he was of Pretola—easy to guess that whatever that dark-eyed, bronze-skinned Ilario did seemed good in Madriale's eyes; and Ilario beautiful in the doing thereof. Since they had come together as school-lads it had been so. It would always be so, one would say. In this friendship, Ilario ruled. For Felice was among those whose natures are fed with a deeper joy in the regard they feel than that by which they excite.

"Notes enough, my most talented Felice—O Felice sempre felicissimo!" observed Ilario, drawing away his hand in turning over the sheets. "But are your notes—music? Not always. Let us look further into your inspiration, my dear Felice."

Therewith Ilario sat down. His attention became

more and more uninterruptedly fixed. His bowed head as he turned the leaves toward the paling light, concealed the keen absorption possessing him. Felice walked around and about him or looked out of the window. Almost in silence, Pretola read on and on. But he read with an expression gathering in his fine features which a kindly physiognomist would not have liked. For it was—jealousy!

Jealous of Madriale? He had not been anything less than that for a long time now. For months there had not been a day, perhaps, when Ilario had not felt a pang of it. Even a good friend may be jealous—though a great soul and a great love will cast jealousy out. Ilario was not really a bad fellow, and he was fond of Felice. But he had not banished that serpent! How often it had bitten at his heart when musicians had said that he, Ilario Pretola, was not without ability as a composer; but that the blond lad, so much with him, seemed to be a sort of genius, especially in "this quite new style" of writing for the church. More than once, in class and in contest, some indiscreet teacher or *dilettante* had poisoned Ilario's mind for hours and days, with comparisons. "Pretola," said old Nardi, after some months with them both, of hard work, "Pretola, my lad, you soon will possess all counterpoint at your finger-ends—but your friend upstairs ought to lend you some of his ideas. You have too few; he has almost too many." One night, the great Alessandro Scarlatti, on his way back to Naples, had happened to listen to a noble "Benedictus" by Felice, at a *serata musicale*, given by a bolognese gentleman. "You are a wonderful

young man," said Scarlatti cordially to Felice, pressing his hand heartily, "I shall keep my ears open to *your* doings henceforth!... I do not altogether like some of your ideas—they are in a style new to me—somewhat. But you seem to have genius, young sir! I, Alessandro Scarlatti, I tell you so."

Ilario Pretola standing over in a dark corner of the great room, watching, listening enviously, suddenly had drawn back deeper behind a pillar, finding his teeth set and his eyes glittering and his breast hot, at the glorious Neapolitan's words. "Genius? Felice? Always his 'genius'! So he has in him then what I have not!" That thought was growing like the turn of a knife in a stab!

This evening, with a vigilant mind set upon those pages, Ilario surely needed more affection and self-control than ever. For he saw there, really and with his own eyes, just that wonderful, priceless, curious something that he had not—genius; expressed in a measure so astonishing and so prodigal that Ilario was almost confounded. "This is not merely a motet! It is a miracle!" he exclaimed under his breath. "It surpasses Palestrina!"—" *Aquae multae non potuerunt extinguere charitatem, nec flumina obruant illam* "—"Many waters shall not quench love neither can the floods drown it"—ran the text. Madriale had given those stiff old Vulgate-verses a setting that made them sound more of heaven than earth! They were married to a series of limpid and ineffable harmonies, each so delicately exquisite as foil and partner to its fellow—each succession of *crescendi* and *decrescendi*, with voice melting into voice through such surpassing taste, ingenuity and loveli-

ness, that when we study such matters in our epoch we feel that their secret died with their day, died with the like of Felice Madriale. As Ilario studied that score, a fabric of such perfectly blended beauty, originality and strength, as he heard it singing itself in his brain, Pretola could well exclaim to himself that there had been nothing quite like it in Italy yet! Only a man sure to rise could have written it. Indeed, with it written, he *must* rise!

"Ebbene, caro mio Ilario?" asked Felice. He had not been watching Ilario. The sunset, now deepening in final colours, had held his attention. Could angelic choirs express in long chronic accents those mystic expanses of orange, carmines and purple-browns? "What do you think of it?"

"I think that you have spent a hard holiday," Ilario replied sweetly, with outward vivacity and inward bitterness of spirit! "A hard holiday, my Felice!—to make many a fair breve and semibreve. The diligent shall prosper, that we know! And your music is very pretty, very pretty. I would I could write such! What will you do with it?"

Felice laughed. He took for twice or thrice its value his friend's doubtful praise. Ilario was pleased with his music; that was enough for Madriale.

"Oh, I shall let it lie in my desk until I can have charge of a good choir to sing it," he replied. "There is no chance of listening to it in Bologna—at present. My new style, as some of you call it, frightens even Father Sebastiano."

"I believe it," returned Pretola, as he handed back the manuscript. Felice laid it away. What Ilario heard, as Felice dropped it into the chest, was

a voice from somewhere—not from Heaven, for it was the voice of a devil. The voice said—"The man who shall give that piece of music-writing to the world as his, he need not think of a long struggle to make himself famous! All the music-world will soon be at his feet."

That was what Felice was shutting up in his old chest? That! Ilario started up. He began walking up and down the room.

He slipped his hand into his pocket. It rustled a letter, lying there since yesterday. The writer was his uncle, a cardinal, no less indeed than the great Cardinal Marucci, of Rome. He was educating Ilario. He wrote: "If you can come hear at once, nephew, and with a few ideas in your scores better than what I have heard of yours—come. The musical directorship of the Sistine will be vacant—soon. I will undertake to install you. But remember—you must make some impression here. Get to work at once."

A cold tremor, then a heat, pervaded Pretola's body. He thought of his uncle (some vouched for a nearer relationship) the potent, art-loving Cardinal. He saw in his mind a crowded chapel—the Holy Father, ever a connoisseur,—the appreciative, subservient papal court—the music-loving capital. He thought of Madriale's objectless, time-wasting talent as to that motet! Oh, irony of circumstances! Oh, unkind accord between opportunity and inability!

Most of this time Felice's eyes were fixed on his friend. How beautiful was Ilario when he was held by a deep thought! How fine his features, how lofty his carriage, what a noble air! A man was blessed to possess his friendship; especially

as he, Felice Madriale, was yet only a poor copyist but Pretola a learned music-student, noted in Bologna—with money and grand connections.

"Come my Ilario," he said cheerfully, "do not stalk about so! Cease your meditations on the faults in my motet. I will have my walk with you, instead of in the procession, or with a rattle-tongued lass." He rubbed his blue eyes and stretched himself heartily. He put his arm into Pretola's. "Let us be off whither you will!" he said coaxingly.

Ilario drew himself away. "No my dear boy! I have supped—and I have a headache. Besides, I promised to meet the Signor Conte, my patron, for awhile this evening. I forgot it. You must walk without me, for once. I will come in by and by, to drink a glass with you."

Thereupon Ilario slipped out of the room quickly.

So Madriale spent most of that evening at his writing-table; poring over the scores he was proud to possess, pottering among his papers, scrutinizing again the harmonies in the motet. Once, lifting up his voice, he sang softly the highest voice in a madrigal, through. What a tenor it was!—so resonant and pure, and so naturally controlled by the singer! The convent clock struck nine. Just then, Ilario came in again.

Ilario had gone out not a little saturnine. He came back with nerves at a different tension. He had met, as agreed, the Signor Conte R—, and had learned something curiously opportune. The Conte R—had suddenly decided to send his secretary, and a confidential servant of his household, from Bologna, at early daylight, on state-business, to Rome. But there

chanced to be a little matter, not politics at all, that the Signor Conte did not care to put into the hands of his secretary, nor of any member of the family, though he was very anxious to have the affair at once attended to, in Rome by some capable emissary. The Conte R— had put the topic before Ilario Pretola. "Would Signor Pretola care to undertake the errand?—leaving Bologna that evening with the secretary, but on a pretext?" And so on. Ilario, after the interview with the Signor Conte, had taken a lonely walk, quite by himself, busied with certain exciting—and evil—considerations.

"Come, my San Giovanni!" he cried now, as he shut the door behind him, "I have returned as I promised. No more singing nor music-thinking! The holiday is not yet over."

The two friends sat down. Ilario produced a dusty bottle, holding it high over his head.

"In all your life you have tasted nothing better than that!" he declared. "It is from the cellar of my patron."

And so it was. But the physician of the diplomatist had procured it for Ilario, and it had not come from the physician's hands quite as it had come from Count R—'s bin. Felice drank.... Ilario seemed in great spirits. He talked incessantly and animatedly. He told Felice a score of stories of the day's scenes. He sang bits of sparkling ditties. He mimicked incomparably a quarrel he had seen between two tipsy monks.

"Ilario, Ilario, how droll you are!" laughed Felice, "I wonder that you do not find me dull! You who have such spirits!" But presently Felice

felt himself growing sleepy. Ilario's voice began to reach his ears from a point yards away—as if across the room. Ilario's brilliant dark eyes, Ilario's carmine lips, smilingly showing the white teeth behind, began blending, in a curious, kaleidoscope effect beyond the table. Soon Felice did not answer. Ilario's questions—Ilario's voice became a mere murmur that soothed, wordlessly.

Felice's head fell gently forward. Pretola rose and guided his victim, half-carrying Felice to a couch, a few paces behind. Madriale fell back upon it, now sleeping unwakeably. The physician's arabian powder had done its work admirably. For a moment Pretola feared an overdoing. He listened.... No, Felice slept calmly, his young heart beat with regularity and firmness.

Ilario loosened Madriale's clothing, partially undressing him, that his repose should be easier. The breathing of the young composer was the only sound in the room as Ilario opened the chest. He withdrew the manuscript of the motet, along with a dozen other scores, some complete, some incomplete. He must take everything, or better to take nothing!

Holding the manuscripts in his hands, Ilario paused, breathless now, in the centre of the long dim room. He looked over at Felice, stretched unmoving on the low couch. Only Felice's hand—the fine, long-fingered hand that had penned the motet—extended along the couch into the candle-shine, a hand white and tranquil as marble. The rest of Felice's slender young figure lay in deep shadow.

Somehow Ilario could not look away from the

sleeper at once... Farewell, Felice!... Alas! that was the end of the friendship, of course. Well—they had been coming to it for some time. It was a pity, surely! Ilario lamented the situation, yes! But what was a friendship when one's whole earthly future was at stake?... Farewell, Felice! He was certainly fond of him, was Ilario. A good, amiable fellow Felice always had been—gentle, romantic, affectionate—well, one could say he was almost over-warm toward his friends—rather too demonstratively sentimental... It was a pity, this coming to a fork in the road of intimacy. An unpleasing choice to make! But it was a moment in which he, Ilario Pretola, must look to his practical interests bravely. So farewell, Felice! He would half-forgive Ilario, in time; perhaps half-forget him. For—this subtraction, a forced loan of a professional kind, why, it meant little in such a career as lay ahead of Madriale.

Pretola left the room. He went to his own chamber not far off, in another street. He packed his effects quickly. The owner of the rooms made no difficulty of the sudden departure—whither Ilario did not say. Before midnight came a servant of the Conte R—. He conveyed away some boxes quickly. Ilario followed, to the Palazzo R—.

By the time the sun was rising, Ilario and the secretary of his wealthy patron were travelling southward, with much expedition.

Meantime, Felice slept on, dreamlessly, in the tall house in Bologna.

II.

Some twenty hours later !.. Felice sighed, stirred, opened his eyes, was awake at last. There was still golden sunset in the room. Felice rubbed his eyelids. What did that mean? Was it dawn? Impossible from that quarter! Had he dreamed of the supper in Ilario's company? And of growing drowsy before the supper ended? How clouded was his head! Yet he had drunk no great quantity of that strange fine wine.

"It is impossible that I have slept a whole night and nearly all of a day, too!" he exclaimed, starting up. "Those few glasses!... When and how could Ilario have left me? Ah, I see, I have been ill! Giddiness, faintness must have seized me. But the like of it I have never known before! I dare swear kind Ilario has been tending me all day! God be praised for my recovery!"

He blessed himself, and after waiting for Ilario's appearance some moments, he dressed, and went to seek his friend. His head still was disturbed, his footing was unsteady.

The wife of his host met him in the hallway. "I am glad to see you better," she said. "I have taken care that you were not disturbed."

"Better. Who told you that I was ill? I have not been really ill."

"Signor Pretola said that you had a bad headache. You were to be let alone—I have kept two or three visitors away... He was sorry to leave you so. You have slept all day."

"All day? I don't understand."

Felice stood there—bewildered, incredulous.

But in the next hour, he was an hundred-fold more troubled. Everything spoke of Ilario's departure to somewhere—for good. There was no letter, no clue. Hurt and alarmed, Felice speculated, wondering if it were a joke. No, no—Ilario seldom joked. Joke or anything else, alas! Felice must wait to have the mystery unravelled by Ilario. He went shyly to the Palazzo R—. "The Signor Conte is traveling."—"Where? To return when? And Signor Pretola?"—"We know nothing"... Felice set himself to copying. Then came discovery of the abstraction of his manuscript compositions and sketches, including that newest and choicest darling, the motet, "*Aquæ multæ non—*" He had not many places to search, but he ransacked, in greater astonishment than ever. "Ah," he exclaimed, sinking down by the table,—"what a night, what a day! Ilario has been summoned, I know not where. While I slept, some robber has come hither and taken all my papers—Ilario's letter with them! Yes, it is the work of a robber, seeking I know not what from poor me! Oh, most unlucky, perplexed Felice! Behold enough of one day's mysteries for me!"

There was a knock at his door. "What cheer with my golden-penned son of art to-day?" asked the round, comfortable voice of Father Sebastiano. "You are better?" But Sebastiano checked his greeting. "The saints keep us!" he ejaculated. "What has happened to you? Your dragon of a portress said you must not be disturbed. But really, my lad! You are haggard and dishevelled as some of our great folk, after a ball. Are you feverish?"

Father Sebastiano hearkened in silence to Maddiale's answer. For some time, the priest had shrewdly suspected that there existed evil traits in Pretola, quite invisible to Felice. The priest felt a certain conceit now as to his vague diagnosis. Felice made an end. He looked at Padre Sebastiano with wild eyes.

"It is an enigma!" Felice exclaimed despairingly. "What can have happened to Ilario?"

"Nothing has happened to Pretola. There is no enigma. Look here, my little innocent! Your fine friend and your fine music have left you *together*." "Do you not see?"

"Together? No, I do not understand."

Father Sebastiano went on, without picking nice phrases. "He is a false hound—a vile thief! I have doubted his affection for you—often, my Felice! He has been horribly jealous of you, devilishly jealous, for heaven knows how much time! I suspect that just yesterday he had a chance to leave Bologna for—who knows where? So he stole your music, all your compositions!—taking precious good care not to forget that glorious "*Aquæ multæ non*—" that I was looking at with you, on Sunday!... Yes, my boy, he has stolen it, that he may produce it—and anything else he has filched of yours!—somewhere and sometime, as of his own composing! My dear Felice, your Ilario Pretola is simply the greatest knave in Italy!"

Most unhappy Felice! A long time it was before the truth really took hold upon his soul. When it did, he was stunned. Stunned he remained; no longer arguing with angry Father Sebastiano. Every

defence was overthrown under the reasoning of the priest, a worldly-wise as well as heavenly-wise man.

Father Sebastiano got up, to amble back to his convent. "The blessed Saints keep you my son! Almost I am ashamed of my dear San Petronio—he has neglected you badly. You have had a very cruel opening of those child-eyes of yours. Remember that nobody should trust most where he loves most. If that fellow Pretola had been a woman, you couldn't have adored him more!... Well—I'll see you to-morrow. Meantime, not a word to anyone—eh?—of this business. It will be better not. Not a word! I know why. Wait. You shall see!"

Father Sebastiano gone, Felice threw himself down upon the couch—that accomplice-couch! which knew so much—all! So violent a passion! It could have wrung one's heart to behold a young spirit suffering so miserably. Anger and disillusionment for himself, and a storm of grief and shame for the friend he had believed he knew so clearly! It desolated in a whirlwind the garden of his young soul. Every leaf and flower seemed stripped away. Therewith mounted, too, the virility of the young man's nature in indignation against so contemptible a wrong-doer and wrong-doing; against that calculated theft of his music; above all against the kidnapping of what he might call his fairest child of genius—the motet, "*Aquæ multæ non—*." And Hario had chosen the very hour of its completion for his rascality! On it Hario might even be planning to build his artistic fortunes! If so, "*Aquæ multæ non—*" would grow old under a false parentage, during how long a time! Or forever so! O, base subterfuge!

But still, under all the sense of wrong, was this deepest, cruellest, most bewildering realization—that he had loved a shadow! For this having happened to day, when had there ever been any Ilario? In that hour had the devil made Felice the companion of a changeling? No! There had never been any Ilario Pretola! These many years—the beloved Ilario, the friend, loved far more than wife or mistress, dwelt-with and clasped daily to his heart of heart had been only a demon, a mere creation of affection and credulity! Alone in the world Felice felt himself now; long having been alone, yet not knowing his desolate plight till now... Ah, Ilario seemed to vanish farther from actuality—recognition—each instant! Ilario was a shade, a myth, an error of heart, dissolving into chaos and muck, with an ironical, flashing smile on its lips, in perpetual farewell and disillusionment.

"But it shall not be perpetual!" cried Felice, upspringing and darting forth his arm. "For, *this* man I have never known! *This* Ilario I have never loved! *This* Ilario I have a right to follow, to denounce—to hate! I will pursue him to my last hour and to the world's end. He shall surrender his theft amid the hissing of Italy! O, thou vile, false counterfeit of my friend Ilario! My vengeance shall entrap you!... The man that I loved is dead and buried. He lived—perhaps—sometime. But now he is dead. So then thou who art but devil in his likeness, woe to thee!"

Next morning Felice Madriale looked like a different young man. In one night, his face had taken on a stern look, foreign to it two or three days earlier—the look of a man brooding a bitter purpose.

He spent some days still, trying to discover whither Pretola had gone. All copying lay neglected. The lonely room was deserted. His search was useless. Most successfully had Count R— and Ilario covered distances and traces.

Toward the third afternoon's end Father Sebastiano sent for Felice. " You have discovered nothing ? Of course not ! You say he missed taking the first draft of that motet, after all ? The rough draft that I saw a week ago—luckily—as did also Brother Paolo. Excellent oversight ! you must manage to overtake him!—to confound the fellow. *That* you owe to your own future, and to your art, my son ! Perhaps I can help you. Listen. Our Superior despatches me at once on some commissions, to certain southern houses of our order—to quite a dozen different cities, I believe. Now, I have asked leave to take a young layman, as my companion and secretary. Will you go with me ?... That first step is better than any other."

Felice bowed his head quickly. " I will go. Surely ! "

Felice packed, stored, locked. The pair quitted Bologna in four-and-twenty hours. Neither Madriale nor the priest talked much. Father Sebastiano was already troubled at the alteration in the young man's aspect and demeanour. Felice journeyed on, hour by hour, frowning, absorbed in his own reflections.

" He is no longer the same boy," the priest, said to himself. " The honey in him is turned to gall ! All he thinks of now is finding Pretola—reclaiming those manuscripts ! Above all that divine "*Aquae multae non—* ! I don't blame him." But Father

Sebastiano was wrong.

For, it was not of the robbery Felice thought, league by league and day by day, so much as of the robber! His anger was deepened. Pipe, song or organ-tone fell on ears suddenly deaf. He shunned the sound of music. And if Father Sebastiano had guessed just what vengeance for a lost friend Felice so brooded, he would have been more frightened than he was now, in speculating the outcome of that expedition after some lost music.

Faenza—Firenze—Lucca—Siena—the needs of Father Sebastiano's commission carried them through the pleasant country, from one town to another. They made cunning inquiries as to musical doings and musical patrons, ecclesiastical or lay, wheresoever they went. They learned what they could of any recently-arrived strangers, who followed the art. The priest assisted Felice with all the resources of a discreet and respected ecclesiastic. But they could not trace the recreant Ilario anywhere.

Madriale's search might well be indeed, a wearisome matter. The little embassy of Count R— was only one small group among many quitting Bologna on the morning of Ilario's flight. Count R— had taken a specially vague route for Rome. Each halt was invariably at some rural estate of the Count, or of a relative. Hence while Father Sebastiano and Felice were in Siena, Pretola had entered the Eternal City, had discharged satisfactorily Count R—'s secret commission—had enjoyed a most satisfactory audience with Cardinal Marucci; and already was receiving high encouragement for obtaining a post in intrigue among a dozen competitors.

" Have you any news ? " asked Felice of the priest one night, at cliff-bound Orvieto, where they were to remain some days. Father Sebastiano had been visiting the bishop.

" None. In God's time, my son !... Patience ! "

Father Sebastiano by this time heartily repented, more than now, that he had brought Madriale along with him at all. The only consequence the old priest had had in mind was a just exposure—restitution. Alas !—he was realizing daily that not merely such punishment did this silent, brooding, transformed Felice Madriale meditate. The countenance of Felice had grown like a marble mask of Vengeance. Father Sebastiano shrank from encountering those eyes.... Felice never named Pretola. Sometimes, as a thought crossed the young man's face, it assumed a terribly suggestive expression.

Father Sebastiano was glad when they reached Viterbo ; a commission of length was to be fulfilled there. " If Pretola has gone very far southward, then I will no longer help Felice to dog him thus—to his hiding-place, " said Padre Sebastiano to himself. " I do not care to have any more of a hand in their meeting than I have had so far ! No, not even if it were for fifty motets, all fit for the ears of the Madonna !... No, no ! Felice must go on his way alone, if I cannot persuade him to return presently to Bologna with me ; or to take some post or other down in these parts. He can write better music than those stolen matters... He can afford to forgive that rogue. I must try to manage him. "

But lo, at Viterbo came a letter ! Father Sebastiano must needs go on—to Rome ! In secret dismay,

Father Sebastiano told Felice.

"I decided, long ago, not to return northward until I had been to Rome," the young man answered. "We do not part, father. Rome is a likely place to find sinners as well as saints." And Felice smiled—hatefully.

That night, once more said the priest to himself, in fear—"Yes, yes, I did wrong in bringing him! I see it now. Murder is in that young man's heart! If they meet, two souls may be lost...! He thinks now only of revenge upon an Ilario who has taken the place of one he loved and believed in. He will kill Pretola."

Not many days later they reached Rome. Father Sebastiano, at his first interview with his host, a canon of note, heard a carelessly-given bit of news that sent swift blood through his timorous heart. He avoided Felice that night—much perplexed.

But Felice met him, laughing softly and wildly. He looked up at the priest:

"He is here! At Cardinal Marucci's. I have found him! he exclaimed.

The nervous father looked out of the window. "You have not—met?" he faltered. "Be calm, Felice! For—I see death in your eyes! Remember—he was your friend"....

"We have not met. But we shall meet, very soon.... He has been named for a great musical post here... I thought that the Cardinal had bidden him go about his business—there was no love between them last year, no! And listen—he has been chosen because of a wonderful piece of music, one most particular piece! It won in the competition.

It is a motet—'*Aquae multae non potuerunt*'—Think of that! My motet! The Holy Father and all the city have been mad over it! Mad! It is so new—in so beautiful a style, they say."

Felice clenched his hands and stared at Father Sebastiano, yet as if he did not see him with those wide-opened eyes.

"But I have him! To-night there is a concert in the Holy Father's presence. *His* motet, as they call it, will be sung! Am I not lucky? I have invitations for you and myself."

Father Sebastiano looked piteously at him. "Felice"—he began. The young man did not hear. "Felice," he repeated, rising and laying his unsteady hand on the other's shoulder,—“we will not go there, my son! You must not. You know why not.”

Felice shook off the hand. "What else is my errand here? Oh, do not fear for him! I swear to you that I despise him too utterly now to hurt a hair of his head! But I shall certainly confront him and expose him, even had he a dozen Cardinal Mazaruccis at his back!"

"It is no time or place for it, Felice! It will be scandalous! Before such company—the Holy Father.—"

"It is exactly the best time for it! Father, you promised to support me;—you who saw my work often before it was finished. You cannot refuse! You must go with me to-night. You must. How can you shrink from a just man's act because it must have its course among rich churchmen and strangers?—even before the pope—or twenty popes?"

Father Sebastiano flushed. He was silent for a moment. Then—"So be it," he said resolutely.

"It is not the stir of exposure that I fear... I will go with you. When you speak, I will say my say, even before the Holy Father. But Felice—one moment!—There, give me your dagger, my son. Wear no arms upon you to-night. And promise me to be calm..."

"I will be very calm!" said Madriale ironically—"as calm as a living man before a corpse."

III.

Madriale and the priest made their way betimes to the Palazzo B—, well-used to such entertainments. Its owner was a famous patron of arts.

Madriale seemed quiet. They had discussed and decided upon a plan of action when the moment should be most auspicious and public.

The hall was very full already... They distinguished Cardinal Marucci and many other eminent dignitaries of the papal court. There would be a great concourse—fashionables of the city included. Father Sebastiano and Felice were seated modestly, by an attentive acquaintance, in a cool and acceptable spot—a loggia opening beside them. A long terrace descended into a corner of the moon-lighted gardens. The priest tried to divert his excitement by overlooking the brilliant scene. Felice kept his eyes on the door by which the guests of honor were entering. A small choir took its place. But no Ilario Pretola appeared. Presently the Holy Father was welcomed. He reached his seat. There seemed to be some delay. No sign of Pretola in audience or

among the musicians! Felice's brow contracted in suspense. The first part of the concert began; and proceeded through several numbers. Other matters—also the new motet by Signor Pretola, his famous "*Aquae multae non potuerunt—*" were to follow an intermission, so it was stated. 'Signor Pretola could not possibly be present till within an hour's time,' and the performance of the great novelty was emphatically one of compliment to the composer's visit to Rome.

This explanation was not clear, but it sufficed. The truth was that Pretola was not far off; but he knew how to stimulate interest in himself and in his share of the programme.

Felice slipped out upon the loggia, during the intermission. His head throbbed. His eyes were dazzled, he was hot and cold by turns. There were but a few dozen steps from the loggia to the turf; he descended them. Air, and a moment's stillness!—he must have them! Father Sebastiano, busy conversing did not notice the escape.

In the garden all was cool and peaceful, save for sounds of the company in the concert-hall. Felice walked on beyond the nearer shrubbery. He passed the marble oval of a fountain, trickling its silvered water over a glittering Leda with her swan. Felice stood still. How tranquil was the night! And he so agitated...!

Around the path came a figure. Ilario Pretola appeared, coming hastily toward a private entrance to the concert-saloon. Ilario looked up. He saw Maddriale upright beyond the water, and knew him. Felice stepped forward.

In the small open space, gravelled and enclosed with shrubs the two faced each other.

" Ah! It is you Felice!" ejaculated Pretola. Ilario did not say it in any tone of terror, but more in startled, friendly salutation. Ilario's self-control was due to an expectation, day and night—eating, walking, talking, thinking all these weeks—of a sudden meeting. " You—in Rome, Felice! Since when, my dear fellow? "

" You know for what I am here! " responded Felice sharply—icily.

" Possibly," Pretola replied, still with outward composure. " But—stand back, an instant. Be plain, if you will, that I may be sure that I know. "

" Either you will enter yonder room with me," Madriale went on, leaning forward and fixing his eyes on the immobile man before him, " either you will enter yonder room—at my side confess to your patron and all the company the base thievery that you have committed—declare who is the author of that motet—my own, my darling labor that they will sing presently in *your* honor—. Or else—"

" Or else, Felice? " repeated Pretola with perfect guard over himself. Or else? What is the " else " ? "

" Else as living man you shall not pass me. "

Pretola smiled calmly. " An instant to consider, Felice," he answered, looking directly into Madriale's face; still not baulking at that name of friendship's long usage. Felice had given a nervous twitch of his lips as he caught name and glance. Pretola continued, " The situation is startling, I confess. But—I do not argue what has brought it to us

—what has made it justice. For it is just ! "

There was a step again on the path—this time behind Madriale. Across the fountain stood a third party to the interview—a servant of Prince C—, one well-known to Ilario. Ilario took no advantage of the interruption. He called out :

" Davidde, tell my uncle and the Abbate Leo I am coming. I have a moment's important business here—with a friend. An old friend." He uttered that last word firmly. The domestic withdrew quickly.

" Felice," said Pretola slowly, as the steps died away again, " you ask me to choose in a hard matter. Of course, I—I have no defence. None !. I took your music. I stole it from you—especially the '*Aquae multae non—*' that has won me my new post—won such a night of honour—of shameful, villainous honour—as this was like to be. But," Ilario went on, speaking clearly, slowly, in a voice that in the past had possessed such a caress, such a charm for Felice Madriale's ears, that it had thrilled his inmost heart at Pretola's will, " but I fancied—I fancy still—that I needed it more than you. For, Felice, I could never, never write one such work as your worst ! You can write fifty, as good or better than your best of to-day. It is not in me—alas, never I—to invent as you ! I am nothing save an echo of others—an empty vessel—music-machine, not composer ! "

Madriale struggled with a spell that had begun to close upon him, stifling consciousness that his hour of fierce and just reckoning was here. O, incantation, O sorcery, devil, or what was it !—that lay in those accents of Ilario ? That came in each glance from his eyes, even in the pallid moonlight !

But Felice rallied himself fiercely. "No more!" he whispered hoarsely. He caught at the handle of that second knife he had not given to the prudent priest. "I am desperate! I shall kill you! I shall kill you! Devil, I shall kill you, if only because you look like a demon-friend I once was bound to, to whom I gave heart, soul and body,—my Ilario Pretola!"

Madriale stepped forward. Ilario did not move. At that instant there rose, from the concert-hall behind them, the sound of voices. The music in which they blended swelled up with an ineffable purity and sweetness. It was the motet! Out upon the calm night, in the solemn gardens, swelled the words, "*Aquae multae non potuerunt—extinguere charitatem—charitatem...—chari-ta-tem.*"

By an error of the chamberlain, or by a misunderstanding of the Abbate Leo, in charge of the entertainment, it had been understood that the composer was already of the august company, but desired to hearken from an inconspicuous place. The little band of choristers lifted up their voices confidently, transportingly—" *Aquae multae non poterunt non potuerunt extinguere charitatem*" — *charitatem—!*"

Ah, that word *!.* containing all—excluding all—!

Without, in the garden, the composer and his false friend stood silent, by mutual assent, listening, gazing at each other. It was Felice's first hearing of his motet, by any embodied choir. Its effect upon him now was to astonish, to entrance him. Had he written that thing?... The fiercely human situation of this moment, the bitter, shameful under-story of its presentation here, as the work of another man,

all *that* had grown dim, in listening to such beauty, hitherto unrealized. Felice stood like a statue. A great change stole over his face. Months of storm and embittered brooding were effaced, as if by magic. Loud and clear soared the complex, exquisite harmonies. The moonlight cast an unclouded radiance on the face of the Felice Madriale of old; the joyous, serene child of the heavenly art,—the lover of one friend... The stars seemed to shine with a strange lustre, as if their radiance accompanied some steadfast symphony, evolved in the eternal courses of the spheres!

Pretola also waited. Motionless, he kept his eyes fixed on Felice—his arms folded. In Ilario, too, a kind of psychic revolution was in surge. His selfish madness, his audacity, even his desire for honour among men—they had fled. What was the whole world worth when abstract Beauty spoke? A sense of unworth, of nothingness, of shame deepened!...

On and on went the singers, to the close of the work. As they reached it, a low applause swelled into a loud acclaim. And what happened in the garden to those two?

Remember that Felice Madriale was no ideal of resolute and heroic human nature. Few artist-spirits are such. Felice raised his eyes to the night-sky an instant and sighed, as one might sigh awakening from a dream. Once more regarding Pretola before him there, meeting his glance: "Ah, God!" he cried, "ah, good God! It is too much! It is you—you! No shade, no devil!—just you! I can do nothing against you! I would not—no, not for my life!—my salvation! I have loved you always, I must love

you till I die, in spite of a million motets—a million cruel wounds." He cast the knife into the fountain. Rushing forward, he threw himself upon Ilario's neck. "Let us forget all, all! Anything, everything, except that we are here, together again!... And as for that which tempted you, let it be that not I wrote it nor you—but some angel of Up-yonder! Or if I did commit it to paper, as a thing of so many notes, shall I, who am a part of you, I a part of whose self you are, baulk at my best to do you a little honor when I can?"

That was a long embrace in which the two stood there. Ilario was weeping as one from whom indeed an evil spirit had gone out. Neither friend was able to utter another word. None were needed. A new era of their friendship had begun—and it was one destined to perfect in both all that could mean human unity.

Father Sebastiano suffered torments that half-hour. He could hardly contain his uneasiness when Felice failed to return to his seat after the intermission. The evening's errand and plans were brought to naught!... And where was Felice? Had he met and throttled Ilario? When however the two young men came into the room, Father Sebastiano could scarcely believe them to be themselves. There was something transfiguring in their faces as they advanced. The priest marvelled that others did not remark it. But none seemed to do so save himself. Nor did another soul in the splendid circle that night, that lauded Pretola (Felice Madriale stood by, beaming with pleasure) suspect the authorship of the motet, "*Aquae multae non potuerunt—*", nor was ever

divulged its real origin. You will find the motet printed in the scarce old folio of Ilario Emanuele Pretola's works ; published in 1690, at Rome.

Perhaps, after all, Felice spoke truth. Possibly no mortal man may call himself other than a sort of stenographer, a mouth-piece, of any such noble music. Father Sebastiano said as much to himself a few days later, as he was travelling north from Rome, alone, bound for Bologna; leaving the two friends in Rome. There they dwelt happily long years, Madriale soon as a great figure in his art, and Pretola at least a conspicuous one—albeit people sometimes said that " Pretola himself did not compose his best compositions. "

" I shall never let out that queer secret of theirs," mused the priest " And really to love much, and to forgive much—*ebbene*—it makes the world as melodious as when all the morning-stars sang together their motets and madrigals for joy ! "

(TO MRS. HENRY WILLARD DENISON.)

AMIABILITY: A CONVERSATIONAL TRAGEDY

SCENE: *The morning-room at Miss MAYBERRY'S rural home, near Boston. The lady is seated in an armchair manipulating a large fan. Opposite to her, with his eyes fixed indolently upon the vista of the garden seen through the open windows, is sitting Mr. NORMAN BUTTERS. He is again in the United States for a few weeks, having a charming bachelor's residence in Florence, and seldom revisiting America. A pause in the conversation has occurred.*

Miss M. (*looking up smilingly*). Well?

Mr. R. (*starting and returning the smile*). I beg your pardon! You see that is the worst of feeling one's self so confirmedly at ease with an old friend, Emily. When a man is wooed by a meditative moment he succumbs to it without a struggle.

Miss M. No, not the *worst* of—shall I call it our predicament? A good many men, not super-sensitive, have thought that the privilege of listening to wholesome truths about themselves from the "old friend's" lips was a severe handicap on the relationship. But don't look about for your hat, Norman! I don't see you often enough nowadays not to forget your faults when I do. (*To herself*: I wonder if it isn't a pity that I ever saw them so distinctly?) Come, tell me what Roman thought was wrinkling your forehead speculatively just now. Your brow looked like a bar of music—the minor chord of a weighty

cogitation sprawled all over it.

MR. R. Thanks. Your simile flatters. As it happens, however, I was only recollecting that Jack Bream promised to ride with me after luncheon; and sent me word that his wife was in her room with such a preciously severe specimen of those periodical "headaches" of hers that he thought that he must stay at home—for once. And then—well, I went on to remember, for the five-hundredth time, what an unsymmetrical pair those two are, Emily,—how contrasted! I never see Jack but that I pity him!

MISS M. (*dryly*). It's very good of you to take that trouble. Why, please?

MR. R. Why? Think of Jack—handsome, clever, attractive fellow, a man liked by every woman or other man directly he is met—mated for life to a girl like Janet Rainsworth! (*He rises and stands on the rug, leaning upon the chimney-piece.*)

MISS M. (*regarding him, not without admiration, as the attitude is one which becomes him*). You are very fond of your friends, Norman, are you not? In fact, it's an idiosyncrasy which ought to be numbered among your best. But let me tell you that Janet (whom I have always known better and more fairly judged than you) may be unjustly denied her share of compassion on account of this marriage. In fact, I am sure she is so! Oh, no!—don't look at me in that bewildered fashion! You are prejudiced here; if reasonable in most arguments.

MR. R. Heavens, Emily! Janet Bream 'denied her share of compassion!' And wherefore due...? She is one of the luckiest women who ever breathed! Think of it! Once a beauty, but faded by the time

she reached four-and-twenty; wearied of society because she had ever lacked the charm to win any success in it; increasingly an invalid, so much so that her great wealth brought no enjoyment! And lo, she loved and (dare we suggest anything else, since he has married her?) was loved by the most popular and charming fellow of our set! Jack Bream! Vigorous, full of life, possessed of perfect tact to adapt himself to any surroundings, above all, with the sunniest, the most unfailing amiability! Why, Emily, the fact that Jack Bream is to-day what he was before he married that serious schoolmate of yours is enough to make his character "stick fiery off" forever! There! I'm out of breath! (*Subsides into his seat, rather ashamed of his own warmth.*)

MISS M. "The sunniest—most unfailing amiability." Ah, Norman, finish that sentence! Finish it with "—And therefore, one of the most completely selfish of men with whom it is a wife's lot to be brought into daily contact." Poor Janet! Small wonder that she has kept on growing languid, and jaded, and faded!

MR. R. (*indignantly*). Upon my word, Emily! One would fancy great amiability were tantamount to selfishness! Do you mean that—arguing from Jack—the more of the first quality, so much the more of the second?

MISS M. Precisely. My dear Norman, deep selfishness is not necessarily aggressive. The worst phase of it, to my mind, is the passive—or the nearly passive. Just this phase that so often stamps your "unfaintly amiable" men indelibly! It is quite as masterful in its way as that selfishness which prompts

one child to snatch a toy from another, or to refuse to surrender it. Amiability-perfect refuses to surrender itself—to any unpleasant emotion. Your Jack Breams never stint their wives' pockets, nor scant their wardrobes, that my lord may have "more money for cigars." Not at all! They content themselves with slipping beyond the little range of a daily life which wearies, perplexes, ruffles, the Janet Rainsworths of this world. They smilingly decline to be troubled with these tiresome things. A good deal of the time they are unconscious of effort to maintain such a course. Their "amiability"! Why, it becomes a complete hauberk, an armament cap-a-pié, which finally little can pierce! (*Miss M., has been speaking very fast. As if from some internal grievance, she stops, with a meaning look into Mr. Rutger's slightly annoyed countenance, bites her lips and taps her wrist with her fan.*)

MR. R. Ah, ah, Emily! You are still as casuistic as ever!—as you used to be on one or two other questions (*looking intelligently at her*) which I have had the honor to discuss with you—dear friend. You know that I have always said that you missed your vocation. You should have been the great American psychologic female-lawyer. You should have written "A System of Social Philosophy, by Miss Emily Arnold Maybery," instead of—(*He pauses.*)

MISS M. Instead of—(*To herself:* Yes, I have intrigued him! I may as well draw a clear portrait before our talk is over! A portrait with every lineament of which my eyes have so long been familiar. How very well he always looks when he is really interested in anything!)

MR. R. (*continuing*).—Instead of simply existing as altogether too wise, too charming a woman for your old friends' peace of heart.

MISS. M. (*with a sharper satirical accent*). For one of the pieces of heart of one of my old friends, you mean? Ah!... But no diverging! We enter upon a wide avenue of differences as usual! I feel an unmistakable belligerence. (*To herself*: He always provokes it in me, nowadays. How tiresome this tedious, this childish protest of heart against judgment—the old battle! Pshaw!) I repeat it, Norman: your Jack Breams are apt to reach a kind of awful dead-centre of good-nature. From that equipoise it is hard to throw them off. The man or woman, standing beside them, pricked by the thousand pins and needles of life's every day, week, month of the year, is forced at last to admit, with a sigh, that to turn in one direction for sympathy is a waste!... The nearness and dearness aggravates this fact. If the process of perfecting the amiability be not complete, if there be merely more or less admirable capital in hand for its increase, why, then there is a gentle act of repulsion on the amiable person's part toward the comer. If the process be complete, there is next to none. Ah, Norman!—a curious life, a sad life, must the woman lead who is supposed to be happy in the possession of that joy and treasure, not just a comparatively, but *perfectly* amiable man, for her companion!

MR. R. (*uneasily*). Emily! Really, you amuse me! According to you, there ought to be no effort to acquire smoothness of temper in this irritable and fussy world! Is it a social-moral mistake?—

You do not urge that amiability is *always* associated in individuals with the most disagreeable characteristic of all? I don't know what you will be laying down next! Do you think that men and women are selfish in direct ratio to their amiability? That's a pleasant theory of humanity and life!—not at all what Shakespeare's Olivia calls "a comfortable doctrine." Do you set up such a rule as general? How about its exceptions?

MISS M. Ah, my friend, as usual exceptions prove the rule. Exceptions there are, but we seem to find them white-haired—our mothers and fathers, our grandmothers and grandfathers. The altruistic peace, a tranquility of old age usually are united with indifference to the egotisms which stimulate younger mental energies? Age is less aggressively stirred by preferences. Consciously or sub-consciously, age is less likely to be preoccupied by aims and wishes that counter those of others. Trifles have come to appear as they are—trifles. The will and life are in a *diminuendo*.

MR. R. All the same, I've met some repulsively selfish old ladies and gentlemen in the course of my goings about the world. And some of them not one little bit amiable—never were so, I'm positive!

MISS M. Ah? So have I. They are to be discovered. One must try not to add oneself to their number, in growing—elderly; even if to do so is rather instinctive.

MR. R. Also I've known various men and women very far from—elderly—old, I mean—who were considered amiable, extremely amiable, notoriously amiable; but nobody ever called them selfish! That is

to say, if they were called selfish—amiable-selfish, well—they—they—

MISS M. They never heard of it—never guessed it! And so they were perfectly amiable to everybody, right and left, always and everlastingly! Surely!

MR. R. Impossible circumstances those, my dear Emily! They would have known—guessed. Some old and intimate friend would have been fond of hinting to them what he—I should say 'she'?—thought was wrong with them. Some people are always hunting for perfection in their best friends.

MISS M. (*very quietly*) No, not after a certain time of life, my dear Norman. One learns to accept lost illusions... (*A brief silence ensues. After an assenting sign from Miss Mayberry, Mr. Rutgers lights a cigarette. He changes his chair for quite the easiest one in the room, makes a judicious choice of the two best cushions available, and then continues the conversation—with a certain air of personal interest shown by phrases occasionally hesitating.*)

MR. R. Emily, I would like to put a—a sort of a case to you—so to say—in this queer question you make of amiability as so often tantamount to selfishness.

MISS M. Pray do so. Is the case to be young or old? That is to say, elderly?

MR. R. It's quite abstract, of course, so age don't matter. And mind you the case I shall put will make straight against your nasty little theory,—yes, quite so, before I get through with it. You'll see.

MISS M. So much the more interesting. Go on—go on courageously!

MR R. I have in mind—I know of—or to put it so, I know a man—let us suppose. We'll suppose him with zest for his life—few responsibilities of it to hamper him, plenty of advantages for enjoying it. He makes friends with ease, especially friends of his own sex, though he has some women-friends that he values and gets along with pretty well—even if he knows they are extremely critical of him—in some respects. (*Here Miss Mayberry's face exhibits a faint smile.* As to the men, he likes a somewhat plentiful assortment of companionable chaps about him as he journeys through this vale of solitudes! Now, he likes this man's companionship for one agreeable trait, and that man's for another. But one quality he exacts from each of them—primarily and positively—as the passport to his regard and his intimacy. Character, intellect, wit, social rank, wealth, reputation and many other good things that our friend esteems, they all matter not—relatively speaking, in the intimacy, unless along with them is an absolutely amiable disposition. A most amiable disposition.

MISS M. Norman, suppose you talk about yourself, without bothering over disguises? Continue, oh, "most amiable"—anonym!

MR. R. (*reddening and going on hurriedly*). All right! Only wait till I have finished. Where was I? Oh, well, I—this fellow, that is—well—he—I—we get this sort of set around us. It is a distinctive set. The dozen or so in it see one another daily. Wherever I look I see a particular and attractive type of man, varied by what, in comparison with his amiability are rather minor expressions of individuality.

Now, surely you see that being alongside each other so constantly—making tests of our personalities by the hundred petty accidents of our intimacy—it is simply impossible that we could be the sort of humanity to fit into your view of our distinguishing characteristic—the most completely selfish coterie of men imaginable! Our clique could not hold together a week! To oblige, to help each other, to make all due, all necessary sacrifices for one another, to consider each other—as friends must—in emergencies, small or great—

Miss M. Stop just there, my dear friend! You are about to say that you come to knowing one another too intimately—to feeling, perhaps subconsciously, too much at ease with one another, for escaping all sorts of little battles through your individual or common selfishness. Oh, a most amiably expressed selfishness! You suppose your friendly fraternity dissolving, sooner or later, by sheer friction of egotism, if that sort of thing really so pervaded your honied little circle? An answer against that notion is easy. Being gentlemen, and more or less men of the world—hating a fuss—each one of you instinctively avoids as much as possible any rubbing up against just those sensitive spots in each other's temperaments which will most betray individual phases of selfishness. It's an instinctive process all that, more than anything reasoned out!... There's a kind of nervous intuition in it—you curve, you recoil, you slip past, you glide over—often by a narrow escape—mind you!—precisely the contingencies to develop suddenly a lively exercise of egotism before each other. Of course it is all managed with the admirable

good-breeding, tact, social refinement of the male of perfect manners, my dear Norman. A very polished intercourse. As such I beg to applaud it! But its psychic origin is much what I have said, whatever else more external it may also mean... I have called it intuitive; but in part it is of course the result of a clear-sightedness that close intimacy has promoted. Anyhow it does lubricative work in your fellowship of Amiables. And so perhaps can shine on and on—often—over a more agitated social world this soft rose-coloured lustre of your precious galaxy of saccharine spirits!

MR. R. (*laughing obligingly*) Very clever, Emily! Ve-ry clever, very nicely expressed! When you women—

MISS M. For goodness sake, don't begin any of your generalities on "us women" and our "loose arguments" and our "want of sound logical consecutiveness"—and so on!... Oh, I know well enough what you were starting out to say! I've not forgotten your sentiments—nor certain tones of your voice.

MR. R. (*blandly continuing*)—When you women, as I was about to observe, really use your minds capably, it is not always easy to show you how widely you may be in error. No—wait! This time let me speak *my* little piece! I'll give you another aspect of this complicated question of amiability—of egotism and amiability—of selfishness and amiability and intimate friendship—all mixed up together—that is to say, according to your theory. It's (*smiling*) an even more directly personal experience. Do you remember how very intimate—but there, what

nonsense I'm talking!—of course you do remember!—how very intimate your brother Chauncey and I used to be? Especially during, say, the four or five years just after he had finished with Harvard? Before Chauncey's engagement and marriage? The years too, in which you and I used to see most of one another, Emily?

MISS M. (*with a sudden, vague softening of accents and eyes*) Yes. I remember that time very well, Norman. We were all three of us younger-hearted then than we are now! Pleasant old times, those, Norman!

MR. R. Truly pleasant old times indeed, Emily! (*A short silence.*) Well—during those years, Chauncey and I were together a good deal—often morning, noon and night. We were living here in this town. We walked and rode together this countryside over, we travelled together, we followed our fads together, we ate and drank and slept together, like freak-twins in a show. During a row of seasons, we were never a month apart, as far I recollect—not, in fact, until Chauncey's interest in Miss Rowe developed and he began his visits to Albany and—committed himself to his engagement there. If Chauncey was obliged to go somewhere alone at the time I speak of, didn't I prowl about like a lonely tom-cat? You and he spent almost that whole summer—just after your father's death—with my people and me, at Uncle Andrew's old place, down the road. Or else we were up at that jolly little camp on the Algonquin. You remember?

MISS M. Perfectly, Norman. I don't think I am likely soon to find the bright colors of those

days growing dim. Isn't it Rossetti who says that the things of our past which we remember, as time goes on are like sunset-skies—"clearest where farthest off?"
(*Something like a sigh concludes the allusion.*)

MR. R. Nor I, Emily—nor I! Well—I'm not a particularly sentimental man; but I have very often thought that Chauncey and I experienced about as "ideal" an intimacy as ever men realise. We knew one another's individualities to the bottom. We agreed perfectly. Now, Emily, I chose Chauncey for my friend, and I liked Chauncey as my friend, and I kept pace with Chauncey in our friendship, immensely and particularly because of Chauncey's extreme amiability. Chauncey was one of the most perfectly amiable man, of many amiable men, that I have ever known. He had—I dare say he has still—a nature of simply invincible sunshine! I never saw Chauncey unpleasantly upset. I never saw Chauncey peevish, cross-grained, irritable. I never found him getting into tempers with people, into fusses about trifles. We never had a difference worth calling such—in any case, never a real dispute. If a breath of that was in the air, I'm sure that Chauncey was as quick as I to avoid it. Do you mean to tell me that I never knew the real Chauncey? Never touched another side of his social character? Never faced its edge? That is to say the sharp metallic impact of a quintessentially egotistic Chauncey? A man diffusing about him utter selfishness as the logical precipitate of his delightful amiability? That right and left, other people knew Chauncey to be that *other* sort which I knew not? Impossible!

MISS M. (*who has been a little absent-minded during this retrospect.*) No, not impossible, Norman,

though perhaps hard to prove to you, if I wished to prove so ungracious a thing—which I don't wish, not even *pro argumento*. So I will try to be kind and honest, as well. To me, the paradox of—we will say Chauncey, and of many such Chaunceys—refers itself directly to what I just said to you about "intuitive avoidances" between two or more particularly refined and amiable friends. It applies oftener to men, I think, than to women. A thousand trifles are less considered in the lives of most men than in the lives of nearly all women. In any case, I believe (as I am sure you do, too) that there can be between men and men, between women and women, also between men and women, a regard so absorbing that (as if in a kind of colour-blindness) the most patent faults are not perceived. Some very selfish men and women are capable of this passional friendship. It is a mystery in its texture, in its psychic chemistry, that we outsiders do not understand.... Besides, in such an instance you leave a loophole more unguarded than perhaps you suspect, when you remember that you did not actually grow up year by year, week by week, day by day, with my brother. You did not meet Chauncey in essentially his most intimate family life. Not a little, just because Chauncey was for some years so intimate with you, you did not, could not study his more commonplace relations with others. If you wish to discover the inner faults—ungrateful task!—in men and women you must be of their very household and kinship daily.

MR. R. Was Chauncey such a home-egotist, Emily?

MISS M. I don't say so unkindly, Norman. But let me assure you that as little boy and big boy and as young man, our dear Chauncey was decidedly disposed to have his own way. And (you may remember why nobody at home opposed him) he certainly had it, as far as an invalid father, a mother who adored her only son, a train of admiring relatives, and an old army of servants that would run their feet off for a smile from "Mr. Chauncey"—in short, all that could help him to have that same 'own way' blended in his ambient.

MR. R. Including help from a particularly amiable sister, Emily?

MISS M. Certainly; though I dare not say she was always either amiable or unselfish! The sister at any rate has recollections of many household contests with Chauncey's will; contests not less strenuous because deliberately kept in a low pitch, and because smiles were never unclouded, even till the end. That end was always Chauncey's victory, although he triumphed quietly, without an afterword—taking his victory as a matter of course. Oh, Chauncey was a master at quiet insistence!—at tactful arrangement of a situation—at sportive compulsion turning out to be duly muscular! What is more, I know well what my pretty little sister-in-law, Mrs. Chauncey, meets to-day, all quite of the same sort; meets it with her adoring passivity as the wife of a gentleman referred to, I believe, by their Washington circles as "simply a Greek god, my dear." But (*smiling*) remember that I admit that Chauncey always was, and I am sure he always is to-day, extremely, oh, extremely—amiable!

MR. R. (*taking some time to light another cigarette*) I admire your confidence in psychic diagnosis of your relatives, Emily. I don't know that I would like you as an—advocate! You're a sort of good humoured *advocatus diaboli*! Ah, ah, my marriage-lost friend! It is extraordinary how stupidly I misunderstood him, and how much Chauncey must have victimized me!

MISS M. Victimized? I don't say that! You may not remember that I used to tell you that Chauncey somehow could make you do whatever he liked because always he could make you think you liked it!... Norman, I might go a bit further in the queer cross-aspects, either to you or to me, of a good many such intimacies. To my mind, a close friendship, subsisting upon ground of great mutual amiability, *quâ* mutual egotism—is a striking refutation of a theory that the 'opposite natures,' the 'unlike personalities' most attract. It's more a series of cases of like-to-like, in a fine egotism, I believe.

MR. R. Oh, you do, do you? Very kind. Thanks. (*They look at each other, smilingly in fact, with what appears to be the most complete good-humour on both sides. Miss Mayberry even laughs. After which refreshment, they return to the supposedly quite abstract.*)

MISS M. I would like to put up one other proposition in this same general question—amiability *plus* selfishness—if it wont bore, Norman?

MR. R. Nothing you can talk about will ever bore me, Emily. What's your question?

MISS M. You were speaking of collecting about one a sort of phalanx, a symposium, of especially

amiable friends; of unruffled, unwilling-to-be-ruffled souls and tempers? The fellowship of kindred minds that's like the saints above—and so on?

MR. R. Yes. Proceed, my dear Diotima! Suppose that august circle completed.

MISS M. And you the radiant lieutenant of it? Of course you all think the world of one another, and so on. Nevertheless, some of those friends must be more attached to you than others. It must be a Song of Degrees, your psalm of suave Graal-knights. Now, suppose that all at once you find yourself needing another man's arm to lean on, another man's hand to pull or to push or even to strike—along with yours. You need true help. I don't mean necessarily money; in fact, I need not bring that sort of help into the situation. Let it be just a matter of your standing out personally against social disapproval, against a mistake that injures you—combating a position, an opinion, a criticism, a calumny, a lie! Now, my dear Norman—on your careful thought and word!—would you think of, would you go to any one of your special little group of gilded cherubs? That is, would you look them up, in reckoning assuredly on the support of one or another of them? In the face of hostility? In an hour of your downright personal adversity? Please make the distinction that I'm not considering your "world" in its general sense—people merely superficially amiable. That larger class would make my proposition simple—for we have been told that "society" is selfish, ever since society, at least of cultivated sorts, began. No—I am thinking of your dear little close corporation of super-amiables! What

would you expect of *them*? What would you expect of any single one of them? Now be careful!

MR. R. (*after a hesitation in which reluctant frankness gets the upper hand.*) I—I can't say I'd expect much, all things considered! I don't wish to be unfair—to be too sceptical. But I'm bound to admit that I have a good many doubts. You see, I am more respectful towards your argument than I like to be!—which I think remarkably nice of me to admit!

MISS M. Much obliged. Now go a step further. Is there any one man, quite otherwise of your intimacy, that you would be likely to think of as truly a friend in need, in such an emergency? Take your time!...

MR. R. I needn't take much time for *that*! Yes, there happens to be quite particularly such another friend of mine. To be sure I don't see much of him nowadays. But still—we have never lost touch, even close touch, with one another—always have remained excellent friends, in every sense. I have perfect confidence in what he is, and what he would be ready and willing to do—or to try to do—for me in any kind of a scrape! He would never fail me.

MISS M. Even to risking his own interests? Sacrificing them a bit?

MR. R. Even to risking them and sacrificing them a good deal! Carew is that sort, so far as I am concerned. I can put him quite in a class by himself there! Indeed, I've always done so.

MISS M. Norman, is your friend Carew a fellow who passes in the social world—his own more intimate social world—as a specially "amiable"

man? Do people generally say *that* of Carew? Would you say it?

MR. R. (*after a moment's hesitation*) Well—no! I can't say that he is! In fact, I would not expect anyone to believe me if I— if I said so to most who know Carew. In point of fact, Carew is not—well, he certainly is not—not exactly—

MISS M. And yet Carew would fight for you? Would stand by you in a fight, as would nobody else among all your "friends"! The unamiable Carew!

MR. R. (*in a tone of quiet decision, which becomes of a sober enthusiasm as he continues.*) Carew! The unamiable Carew! He would go through fire with me! He'd behave a lot, oh, a lot better to me in any trouble I might get into, than I expect I'd ever behave toward him—toward anybody!... Oh, I see what you're after, with your forcing me to examples, Emily! But I really do wholly accept the principle in Carew's case. He's about *the* one person I could trust! His stick-fastness, his—well, his sense of duty in friendship—they are splendid! I'm certain of Carew as I am of seeing the sunshine on the grass out there!... And yet people don't get on well with Carew—socially I mean. There's something brusque—hard—he's very easily put out with things. Plenty of times I've heard Carew called a disagreeable man by men and women who don't know him as well as I do. He's a magnificent fellow through and through, but he takes a bit too little pains to please, too little pains to *be* pleased; a mistake which is often a vast set-back in society. But all that side

of Carew makes no sort of difference if you really know him, and if he's your friend! Carew is just Carew! The best sort of man inside that / know—anywhere!

MISS M. Bravo, Norman—bravissimo! I feel like calling, "Fuori, fuori!" to you, as the Italians do in their theatres. I like to see how on occasion you can do justice not only to a friend, but to yourself—to your own heart as well as to a friend's heart! You see, you *are* more than half convinced of my theory, thanks to what is better than dry argument—a good living and breathing instance! But *à propos* of it, you mustn't fancy that I'd like to build out on such coincidences any scheme that very many unamiable people, the men with sour natures, unsocial souls, the women with bad tempers and peevish nerves, are likely to be our altruistic friends, or even superficially much interested in our adversities. Alas, no! All I undertake to say is that practical kindness, disinterestedness in social life, an average altruism in friendship, may easily be met less often in your smiling, smooth-browed, pleasing and easily-pleased fraternity, than in people of no such distinctive fraternity. Fraternity? Oh, sorosis, too—by all means!

MR. R. Charmed that you include the amiable woman! So conscientious of you, Emily.

MISS M. Certainly! I have no great confidence in the heart of those women that are called your wonderfully amiable sort. We are told that, as to species, women are the more amiable; men the more selfish. We'll leave that problem alone. But certainly selfish women are plentiful enough!

MR. R. Do you think that a selfish man ever teaches a selfish woman to be less selfish?

MISS M. Not often. It's a queer point. I certainly don't much believe that a selfish woman ever teaches a selfish woman to be anything else! So comes it, in fact, that many marriages seeming well-tuned, go a-jangle with all that's discord, to end in more or less tragedy.

MR. R. Tragedy? A large word, Emily.

MISS M. Tragedy—if silent tragedy. Oh, we hear of women who marry drunkards, expecting that love will reform them! We know of wives that have gone up to the altar with *fiancés* that were gamblers to the core, inconstant to the marrow, jealous to mania, brutal, arid or sordid—the bride expecting “to make over” such human beings. As if a woman's affection were a Jehovah! As their faith, so be it unto such wives! But for my part, I think that, in a sense, a woman is well on toward going tragically toward her unhappiness—toward tragic unhappiness for two people—not merely for herself—who will marry a man she knows to be tranquilly and completely amiable-selfish!—such from his youth up, and surely so to be, till the last flutter of his heart in a dull selfish old age!

MR. R. (*He speaks deliberately, with the suggestion of a man who feels something new in this turn of the talk*) Upon my word! You're giving your unlucky lady no end of the benefit of your imagination!

MISS M. My imagination? Merely my imagination? Not at all so, my dear Norman. But I can modify my picture a little. Let it be one pecu-

larily of disappointment, of friction, of eternal rifting along, if not drifting apart—in many years of marriage with such a man, when the woman herself is selfish ! When she knows that she is so— and that to be comfortable and happy, she will never be able to be any other sort of character, any other kind of woman, any other kind of wife !

MR. R. Emily, then she does not love !

MISS M. She loves. But she does not love enough !

MR. R. And he ?

MISS M. He too loves ; but he too loves not enough ! Ah, it's best in any such cases just to go on as two good friends—nothing more. Why, I know of two such types ! The so-called platonic solution of their intimacy was far the safest one to trust to—alas !

MR. R. (*He looks up meeting his interlocutor's eyes with a directness that might disconcert.*) Perhaps you are not entirely fair there, either to the man or the woman, Emily ? Perhaps you let a pessimistic philosophy—a nervous fancy—run away with your heart—I—I mean, of course, with your analysis. Particularly as to *her*.

MISS M. No, Norman ! I tell you, I knew such a woman. I know her yet, for that matter.. She—cared for a man, a lifelong friend. But her conviction of what their mutual egotisms would spoil for them, stood between her marriage with him—implacably. He certainly wished her to be his wife. There wasn't any silly mistake on her part about that. But—you follow me ?

MR. R. Perfectly—perfectly. Pray go on.

MISS M. He—he offered himself to her once. He did his best to change her attitude. In vain! He would have offered himself insistently, again and again, if she had not contrived to keep that sort of thing at arm's length. For she wasn't really too sure of the force of her own resolution. As I think of her now (this was years and years ago, in my first real acquaintance with her) she must have been a somewhat odd girl; maybe a little too philosophic (*smiling*)—socially rather a pragmatic little sceptic! But she did not appear to many others in that light. She became more plainly so, I fancy, just in growing rather older, and living a good deal alone—for she never married. The man who so attracted her, he had many fine traits, Norman... It made less difference to him... Intellectually, those two had much in common. But luckily, or unluckily, my friend had, in a sense, grown up with him. She understood him thoroughly, she knew him to be (*with a rather nervous little laugh*) a kind of charming ideal—to her—of masculine amiability and selfishness. Probably he never thought of that aspect in himself at all. But she and a good many others had no illusions about it! At any rate, she set those two traits down as one and the same in her case and his, and as irremediable against chances of their unhappiness together. So (remember, I insist that she was a very selfish, very good-natured soul herself) she fenced him off! She never told him why; for he wouldn't have understood the reason—then. Perhaps he would have broken it down, laughing away her queer conscience in the question. She was afraid of that, for awhile. Besides, she didn't

know then how to formulate the matter to him, or to herself. It was her intuitive feeling—a dread—not articulate prudence. Oh, yes, she had her doubts often, especially after he had left her and gone to live so far away that she missed his companionship. Her spirit could weary of the struggle! But she never gave it up; and in time her judgment had fully won the practical victory over her heart.

MR. R. *(softly)* Fully—Emily?

MISS M. *(quite as softly)* Fully—Norman.

MR. R. *(softly)* That was then her reason?

MISS M. That was her most decisive reason. But it includes much, you see.

MR. R. Would you say she had made her life happier by such a philosophical consciousness—conscientiousness?

MISS M. *(more lightly)* I believe so—in the main. But then, after all, I don't quite know... What one of us is really happy? Not all of us very selfish and very amiable people, certainly!

MR. R. The man in the case—he—he could easily have misconstrued her motive.

MISS M. Very probably he did. For, as I have said, she carefully avoided formulating—could hardly have done else. But there came a time when he understood; when—I think—he respected her conviction, even if it wasn't as obvious to him as to her.

(A really expressive silence comes now. The sunshine in the cheerful room, a room furnished rather too symmetrically, something too coldly and precisely, seems less bright. Out in the avenue, the elms wave suddenly in a wind that suggests autumn's chilliness. The village-clock in the distance, strikes

musically.)

MR. R. (*with an effort at jocularity.*) She has never changed her mind, Emily? After all she was a woman!

MISS M. She has never changed her mind, Norman, though "but yet a woman." She has not (*laughing a little, but not flippantly—nor even cheerfully*)—because the longer she waited to use that little privilege of her sex, the worse mess the two might have made of things! Don't you think so, too? Come now!...

MR. R. I—I don't know. But—well—I dare say you're right. It was his fault, anyway.

MISS M. It wasn't his *fault* at all! It wasn't his, her's, anybody's fault, if I may say so! And with that, my dear friend, why, the less one says or thinks about such a melancholy little comedy the better, surely! Am not I right? Say "yes" quite nicely please. You *know* I'm right!

MR. R. To please you, I will say "Yes—you were—are—quite right"... In fact your argument and your story will give me plenty to think about, on old or new lines, Emily, for a good while to come. I'll meditate on it all the way to New York to-night, to take my steamer.

MISS M. Ah yes! You sail to-morrow noon, don't you? Bye-the-bye, you really mean that you don't expect to come over to this side, next summer?

MR. R. Yes, quite unlikely! I have promised to do a lot more climbing, up in the Graian Alps, all summer. I need exercise and a change. In fact, I doubt if I come to America again for a long time ahead—if ever—as I feel now. And your plans? You still refuse any and all enticements to sail over to

my side of the ocean for a while?

MISS M. All! I'm growing hopelessly old-maidish—stationary—, provincial—lethargic! Even a lazy letter-writer to you, as you tell me. But I'm never indifferent to knowing what you're about, Norman, as you know. And bye-the-bye, I don't like the idea of your scrambling about those abominable Graian Alps, or any other Alps, since you broke that ankle in doing the Dent Blanche. Some fine day you'll break your neck in the places you seem to like best to tackle in just that sort of thing! Give up all this dangerous climbing—for awhile. Or for good. Come! Please me!

MR. R. No—not just yet. A bad mountain's one of my few pleasures left in this stale life! However, this summer may really be the last one at it. I'm not as clever at climbing as I used to be. *(They have drawn towards the door and shake hands.)* And now—once more, good bye, dear Emily.

MISS M. Good bye, dear Norman! *(with an uncertain accent of playful raillery)* Good bye, most amiable of my friends!

MR. R. *(Sharply)* Thanks. The same to you! Good bye.

(Mr. Rutgers goes into the hallway. He is presently seen in the avenue. He bows and waves his hat—is lost sight of, at a turn of the roadway. Miss Mayberry stands very still at the window, even after Mr. Rutgers has disappeared.)



(TO MALCOLM SANDYS WILSON.)

PROFESSOR JOVANNY'S FUNERAL

UNAFFECTED was the regret in Yellow Bear City, Jinks County, Nevada, when, upon a certain January evening in the year 187—, the news spread that Professor Jovanny was dead. Yes, Professor Jovanny was dead ! Professor Jovany had been a long time, as time runs in communities like Yellow Bear City, piano-player in ordinary to the "Cosmopolitan Hotel and Dancing Pavilion—Ladies Free." Yellow Bear was yet something uncultivated. It was true that its small population found advantage in pursuing the study of geology, rather on the method advocated by Mr. Wackford Squeers, and that tons of gold-hiding quartz were daily crushed through manifold energies. But in spite of a weekly newspaper, thirteen saloons (where discussion upon personal or national policy not unfrequently led to—lead), an unfinished Methodist mission chapel and six dance-houses, including the Cosmopolitan, advances of art and sentiment within Yellow Bear's straggling limits had been coy.

The dint of pity was quite a different matter. It was genuinely felt now. All was excitement at "Cosmopolitan End," where a notice, nailed above the bar of the popular resort, apprised patrons, first,

of the sad event, and, second, of the omission of the usual evening dance, which Professor Jovanny's untimely taking-off rendered impracticable. The street-corner next the Cosmopolitan, just around which stood the house of mourning, was the rallying-spot for groups of sympathizing Yellow Bear citizens. "Poor old One-Two-Three!"—"Handlin'a golden harp, by this?"—and many more potent and unquotable testimonials to the virtuoso's virtues were plentiful and loud. The old and cracked piano itself, at the upper end of the long dance-room, was already draped with sundry torn strips of bombazine. A yellowed engraving of allegorical sort, conspicuously feminine in subject, which the Yellow Bear flies had visited with cruel pertinacity, had been propped upright upon its cover. Its legend, "We Mourn Our Lost Darling" had struck the barkeeper as a delicate expression of grief, under the circumstances. San Monito street was unanimous in confessing that Yellow Bear could well have spared a better man; thereby signifying a man who could drink deep, swing a pick, and shoot straight—especially if in a hurry. Certainly in none of those accomplishments the dead musician had been versed. The editor of the "Weekly Intelligencer," during the last moments of the waning twilight, was correcting in proof an obituary headed in his heaviest-faced capitals, "Mus-es in the Mud.— Death of our Talented Fellow-Citizen, Professor Jovanny." In short, as Rioba Jack expressed it to the crowd of choice spirits hanging about the Cosmopolitan bar, Professor Jovanny's decease was "a suc—cess."

As to this dead Nevada Orpheus who lay white

and rigid around the corner,—whose name, when pronounced nearer to the Atlantic, must have been "Giovanni" something, or something "Giovanni"—what was now to him the petty bustle of Yellow Bear City!—or what the scarcely more important bustle that the whole round earth makes as it spins! Six months back the "Professor" had landed in this rude mining-town of the Sierras. Gaunt, middle-aged, travel-stained and timid, he was a waif and stray of art, blown hither by some ironical wind. Under one arm was a music-portfolio; hanging to the other was a daughter. Nevertheless, Professor Jovanny had made his advent in a smiling hour for his fortunes. Between Dennison—proprietor of the Cosmopolitan—and the newcomer, an out-of-hand bargain was struck in terse Western English and in very badly mangled Italian, that was satisfactory to both parties. So Professor Jovanny abode in Yellow Bear, and won reputation.

Whether he had never tried his hand at other music than the festive waltz, jig and walk-around is open to doubt. Once or twice, vague echoes of more classic forms of music were heard from him, during "intermissions." But certain it was that he played everything terpsichorean with such irresistible vigor and spirit that the Cosmopolitan outrivaled apace all its compeers. The mirth and fun of its nightly revels (termed upon Sundays, out of deference to religious scruples, "grand sacred concerts") waxed ever more fast and furious.

As for the daughter, one emphatic relic of her father's early refinement asserted itself on her behalf, considering that not one of the Yellow Bear species-

male could say that he knew her. Not Rioba Jack, Dennison of the *Cosmopolitan*, "Mister" (whose sobriquet was the derisive contraction of one lone visiting card unfortunately discovered among the effects of Mr. James Thornborough Harrington—formerly of the State of Maine), nor any of their fraternity, had been able to get the real advantage of this mortifying dilemma. Professor Jovanny found a score of excuses for keeping his offspring in utter seclusion. There were no presentations. The girl was hardly ever seen, so jealous was her father's watchfulness. In time Rioba Jack and the rest of them came to respect this exceptional reserve. That is, they ceased to combat it actively. "After all," remarked some one, during a discussion of the topic, "it ain't a bad idea to have one real woman in this here town." There happened to be a considerable female contingent already in Yellow Bear society; so the remark last quoted evinced a good deal of discrimination.

It was not until the evening of the day of the Professor's decease, that took shape, with the session of the wonted parliament around the *Cosmopolitan* bar, the proposition to inter Professor Jovanny with civic honors. The full quorum was present in the hospitable retreat. Distilled liquors flowed, even if no dance was forthcoming. Rioba Jack addressed the company. "It appears to me," said that gentleman, covering with a tumbler—when desirable—his awkwardness as orator and his grave, well-shaped mouth—"it appears to me that surely we had ought—that in view of his position in Yellow Bear—that we had ought to give Professor Jovanny

his funeral." "My sentiments!" interrupted an approving voice, promptly. Rioba Jack continued: "He hain't left nothin' worth chattering about, except the gal; and all gals ain't cash. Jovanny was a artist, way above tide-level—there ain't no mistake about that. Talk about your Padderiskys and Dumb Toms! Talk of your—of your scales, and Angelina Pattys!"—the Rioba suddenly realized that he was drifting among breakers, "—unless a man had heerd our Jovanny rattlin' 'Where was Moses', in this here hotel, he hedn't never heerd no genuine tunin' up at all. I say we had ought to give Jovanny a big time."

The chorus of approval came *fortissimo*.

"I move that Rioba Jack be app'inted a committee of one to wait on deceased, and ask his gal if the notion jumps with her feelin's—like as it were." This suggestion from a distant quarter, however mixed, was to the point. It was carried. Every man present felt equal to himself undertaking that preliminary. But this was no time for permitting personal interests to dam the current of popular feeling. Rioba Jack strode from the barroom. Applause and suggestion swelled behind his back. "Make it a square, out-and-out show—" "Borry the Methodist's gospel-stamp!"—"Pay an entrance-fee for the benefit of the gal!"—"Embalm the corpse!"—and the like, were ideas specially distinguishable. High over all the tumult, broke the stentorian voice of Dennison of the Cosmopolitan, commanding order; enforcing the same by the handle of his knife applied to a plate. Finally a plan of action crystalized. A "square funeral" Professor Jovanny should have.

His body should "lay in state" for the whole of the ensuing day, on the piano in the adjoining dance-room—that piano which had so often been shaken to its center beneath the defunct's nimble fingers. "Mister's" proposal of an admission-fee—for gentlemen only—was accepted. The entire male population of Yellow Bear City was duly to be invited to appear and "view the remains", for the modest sum of one dollar, during any hour of the morrow's daylight most suited to individual convenience. A brass band had not yet been organized in Yellow Bear, or it would unquestionably have been provided. A lavish bar was—of course. At nightfall Professor Jovanny should be buried with all the mortuary pomp practicable.

Rioba Jack did not hurry. He was greeted eagerly upon his return. "It's all right," responded the Rioba, composedly resuming his seat. "Go ahead, all hands! I didn't see the gal, but Big Jimmy and Pearl Kate are settin' round with her. They give her the message. Jimmy says its all right. We can go ahead."

The Rioba was fully posted on the progress of affairs during his absence. The idea of Professor Jovanny's "laying in state", upon the old piano, alone drew forth his contempt in round terms; which, although they betrayed acquaintance with scriptural phraseology, were by no means pious. "Damn any such half-way style as that!" he ended, explosively; "What I say is, buy the old time-box from Denison, and bury Jovanny *in* it!" The uproar that greeted this proposal, like Prospero's tale, might "have cured deafness." Naturally, each person

present promptly claimed to have "thought of it himself" and to have rejected it unuttered, as impracticable. Dennison announced his willingness to dispose of the widowed instrument "at a reasonable figure." There was an unanimous rush into the long dance-room adjoining. Away flew the emblems of grief, dangling about the object of special inspection. Its cover was laid off, in a twinkling. Its length, its depth, its available breadth and strength of bottom were excitedly ascertained. It was bought within ten minutes, by a lavish collection; Dennison incidentally mentioning a price that showed him to be discreetly astute in recognizing a commercial opportunity. The pianoforte bought, thereupon did the whole roomful resolve itself into a committee on—destruction! Alas! what sympathetic story-teller can dwell upon the unholy hammering and cleaving, the ruthless hacking and smashing which ended in making visible for weeks thereafter, in the back yard of the Cosmopolitan a hideous wreck of tangled steel wire, of white and black keys, of splinters of sounding-board—in a word, the entrails of a murdered piano?—prepared for a dead musician's strange last couch!

By ten o'clock the work was done. The crowd departed. Only Dennison, Rioba Jack and "Mister" now remained in the long dance-room. Dennison was smoking, as he leaned against one end of what was left of his late piece of musical property. "Mister," with bared arms, diligently rubbed oil over sundry scratches upon its case. Rioba Jack with hammer and nails was strengthening a weak spot beneath. The flaring light from a couple of oil lamps on the side of the wall brought out strong

shadows on the three dark, mustached faces.

None of the trio broke the silence during a few moments. Presently the Rioba emerged from his close quarters and began hammering at the end opposite to Dennison. He looked up.

"What's goin'to become of the gal?" he queried, abruptly; "Yellow Bear ain't no place for a decent one like her. Specially if she's left alone in it."

"Oh, I've fixed that," replied Dennison, leisurely, "Sally Rosenblume's goin'to take keer of her till she can do for herself."

The Rioba dropped his lath-nail and stopped his pounding. "Sal?" he repeated—"Mother Sal Rosenblume—San Monito Street?"

"Yes! Who else?"

Rioba Jack finished his repairing. Then he quietly turned and slipped on his coat, glancing at Dennison.

"Dennison," he said, with an unwonted accent of expositulation lurking in his voice, "don't do *that* thing! Keep your hand out of deviltry for once—leastways such deviltry. I don't know Jovanny's gal—I hain't hardly ever seen her. T'aint for myself I'm askin' it—but just you let her alone. Won't you?"

Dennison had removed his pipe from his mouth for good now. He stood staring at the Rioba, whose clear, dark eyes under their bushy brows were fixed with a strange brilliancy upon his own. The proprietor of the Cosmopolitan burst into a rude laugh. "What the hell's the matter, Jack?" he ejaculated. Then returning the Rioba's steadfast gaze by an equally pertinacious and meaning look, he answered—with

much deliberateness—"Look-a-here, Rioba! I suppose I *can* take a hint if I *must*—especially when it's rammed down into my skull. This one appears to be so. You and me has got along without the least trouble, ever since we come to Yellow Bear. I should be sorry, very sorry, to be obleeged to have any sort of unpleasantness between us now. But—I always feel bound *to* have unpleasantness with any man, partner or stranger, who interferes with my own partic'ler—sentimental—concerns. Do you take?"

The Rioba made no direct reply. He listened abstractedly. Nevertheless he "took." "Good-night, Dennison—good night, Mister!" he suddenly said. Turning abruptly upon his heel he quitted the Cosmopolitan without another syllable.

The gray Nevada dawn was beginning to filter between the sharp Sierra peaks. Yellow Bear looked like a sketch in India-ink on gray paper. Around the corner of the Cosmopolitan came a little procession not irreverently conveying something over which a sheet had been loosely spread. The air was raw and cold.

"Careful—that's it—steady!" cautioned Dennison, in a low voice, as they mounted the Cosmopolitan doorstep.

"Mister," with Rioba Jack, Big Jinny, and Pearl Kate set down their burden at the upper end of the dance-room.

"Come gals, fly round!" exhorted Dennison, "There's all the bar to be set up across there! Them windows has got to be darkened up—there ain't no time to waste. Mister and me 'll tend to our share

of the performance."

"I say, Jinny," questioned the Rioba *sotto voce* to that nymph a moment later, when Dennison and "Mister" were engaged at a distance, "you left her asleep, eh?" (By the way, there had been no allusion from either party concerned, as to the embryo "unpleasantness" of the preceding night—to "Mister's" secret regret.) "Sound asleep, Jack—just like she was dead-drunk," responded Big Jinny cheerfully, pounding away with her tack-hammer at the window-sash. Rioba Jack frowned. The answer somehow grated against his dormant sense of the fitting. Big Jinny drove another tack, and began to whistle with much expression and vigour, "Nearer, my God, to thee!"

A little later, a magnificent eastern flare of pink and gold, through the one window yet undarkened, fell upon the face of Professor Jovanny, peacefully upturned from his last pillow. A roll of his own thumb-ed dance-music, wrapped about with a white bar-napkin was in his hands. A decent white sheet was laid across his feet. Dressed in his one thread-bare black suit—a pile of his own music beneath the forlorn gray head—truly here went one to the the grave with all that he possessed—except a daughter.

Dennison, the Rioba, "Mister" and the women stood for a moment motionless beside the body, their tasks completed.

"A becomin' caskit!" exclaimed the proprietor of the Cosmopolitan, eying it critically.

"There's somethin' wantin', all the same," quoth "Mister," after the continued pause had grown oppressive, "it looks awful plain."

"Wantin'," retorted Dennison; "I'd like to know what is? Look at them there flags over the windows! Look at that there bar! where all that a man's got to do is to walk up, after he's paid his dollar, and help himself, or let Pearl and Jinny here help him! Look at this here coffin—solid rosewood, round corners, carved legs and ag-graffe treble," he went on, with a grin at his own humour. "Come now, Mister! What more could Jovanny or anybody else want?"

But "Mister" was paying no attention to this sally nor to the mirth it had provoked. "Flowers and fruit—fruit and flowers," he was muttering to himself, apparently confounding a conventional Eastern attention, from the friends of an afflicted family, with the catalogue of some Maine county-fair. "Comes to the same thing—of course," he exclaimed conclusively, striding away from the *de jure* coffin and his companions. He disappeared within the bar-room. "I've made free with them new stores of yours, Dennison," he called out presently, staggering down the room toward the expectant party, overweighted with an awkward load—two stems of bananas and four spiky pineapples. "It won't hurt their sellin'," he apologized. With a dexterous balancing and tying he disposed of the two first-named decorations upright, one upon either side of poor Professor Jovanny's perpendicular feet—vegetable obelisks. A pineapple stood upon each one of the "round corners." Dennison and the rest were hearty in commendations of their friend's thoughtfulness and taste. "That fixes her off dam slick!" exclaimed Big Jinny, in high delight.

The sun mounted. The barkeeper appeared in the adjoining room. First stragglers, curious to learn the truth of any rumors concerning the day's novelty at the Cosmopolitan, strolled across the threshold. Dennison stationed "Mister", and a table on which was deposited a loaded revolver and an empty biscuit-tin with a slit in its cover over, against the door. Big Jinny and the Pearl, were posted at the special bar for the day, which had been furnished forth by no means ungenerously. Himself, he set in an arm-chair, without the dance-room, to advertise the obsequies, to urge entrance into the penetralia, as a matter of duty and pleasure, and to act as master of ceremonies generally.

It will be remarked that, designedly or accidentally, Rioba Jack was appointed to no prominent function in these festivities of grief. He dropped an eagle into "Mister's" resonant receptacle and walked out of the Cosmopolitan. The street was sparsely peopled at that early hour. He turned the corner of the hotel, and halted abruptly to avoid collision with a figure—a girl standing motionless, leaning against the wall, as if summoning up the courage to advance farther. It was Professor Jovanny's daughter. The set face, tear-stained and pallid, with a pair of dark, mournful eyes for its chiefest beauty—the slender form not ungracefully draped by a scanty, black dress—the head bared to the sharp morning-wind—it was a vignette of young grief, passive, despairing, solitary, that the Rioba now gazed at pityingly.

"Good morning, miss," he said, awkwardly. "You're—his gal, I take it. Can I—might I help

you?" Such words, in respectful salute to the weaker sex, had been a stranger to the Rioba's lips for a dozen years.

"I--am going—to my father," the girl replied, in a curiously abstracted fashion of speech; one wherein lay just a shadow of foreign accent. She looked away from the Rioba, and continued, as if partly speaking to herself, "I wish to see—where they have put—my father. I must sit by him. He is very ill. He will need me."

"But," began the Rioba, in distressed perplexity, as she wrapped her shawl closer about her exposed throat (it was a beautiful throat) and made a motion to pass him, "yer father's dead, Miss! Poor old Jovanny's dead! He's layin' in state in his pianny—his coffin, I mean—round to the Cosmopolitan here. You wouldn't like to be a sittin' alone there all day, 'side the coffin, everybody starin' at you. 'Twouldn't do."

"I want to sit by my father," the girl answered more decidedly. "Take me to him."

The Rioba was mute. He saw that his new *protégée* for such he instinctively recognized her, was in that state of mind that other thoughts, and the eyes of all the universe were naught to her. Extremity of sorrow had taken hold upon her. To reason with her would be like reasoning with a clouded mind. He looked again down upon her white, pathetic face. Its innocence awoke a new emotion in the Rioba's heart.

"Come along—Miss!" He ejaculated, not unkindly.

He turned and led the way to the Cosmopolitan.

His companion followed mutely with bowed head. The gathering crowd in the dance-room stared as the two entered. The girl heeded the whispers not a whit. She uttered a low exclamation and walked quickly across to the "caskit."

"He is here, you see!" she said, half turning to the Rioba with a recognizing smile whose transforming effect upon her wan face utterly obliterated from his mind any further sense of awkwardness of his position. Some one pushed a chair forward. The girl seated herself beside the coffin. She fixed her eyes upon the marble face within it—a statue gazing upon a statue. The room was hushed. Suddenly some human vermin—audibly of the feminine gender, laughed, from a far corner. The girl raised her head and looked fixedly whence the sound had proceeded. A troubled expression came over her countenance. But at the same moment she caught sight of the Rioba standing not distant, his face flushed with quick wrath at the insult. His eyes, full of angry compassion, encountered her own. Some shadowy, tardy sense of her utterly unprotected situation must have tinged that brief look of hers with an unconscious appeal. The effect upon the Rioba was electric. Drawing his pistol from its belt, he stepped quietly toward the coffin of Professor Jovanny, against the edge of which that loneliest of mourners had again rested her forehead. The Rioba laid his hand gently upon her shoulder, and drew himself up. "Gentlemen and adies," he said, running his eyes comprehensively round the room as he spoke, please take notice that "this here young woman and this here corpse is under *my* protection. Look at that there red vase

—behind Big Jinny's head!" Before all glances had discovered the gaudy ornament in question it was smashed to atoms by the bullet from the revolver discharged by the Rioba, as a period to his sentence. Big Jinny uttered a staccato screech (to which luxury she was certainly entitled)—not much relishing being so nearly made a target of. But Big Jinny understood that circumstances alter cases. She made no "fuss." "Good boy, Jack!" she exclaimed cheerfully. Then she became, in common with the entire company significantly, silent.

Dennison's startled face appeared at the door outside. He had listened to the speech, and had noted the shot. The Rioba caught his eye and smiled. It was a smile of reserved defiance.

The morning wore on; noon came—afternoon. Professor Jovanny's "laying in state" had been, in the language of "Mister," "a big go." Within its allotted limits of time, well-nigh the entire male and female population of Yellow Bear City, one by one, had entered the door of the Cosmopolitan dance-room, had contributed (so far as concerned the male proportion), had inspected—had imbibed something—had departed. The "heft" of "Mister's biscuit-tin" was something to excite cupidity. And all day long that ill-sorted pathetic tableau in the center of the place had remained changeless—the voiceless, motionless watcher—the tranquil tenant of that uncouth coffin; the Rioba standing beside both—erect, attentive, grave. The room was scarcely entirely still. Even the Rioba did not expect that. There was shuffling of feet, subdued commenting and query. Big Jinny and the Pearl and their sort exchanged pleasantries of a

more or less doric character with their many acquaintances. Glasses clinked and coin jingled. But no word, no ejaculation was let fall that could reflect upon or really annoy her who sat in the midst of the sluggishly revolving whirlpool. More than's once did some acquaintance offer to relieve the Rioba's guard; but that gentleman only smiled and and said, in an off-hand fashion, "I've begun—I guess I'll finish."

Darkness had set in as the funeral procession took order before the Cosmopolitan's door. The majority of the sterner sex in Yellow Bear seemed disposed to swell it. "Mister's" mule-cart preceded; whereon, amputated as to its legs and with its cover nailed fast, was placed the "coffin." Dennison and "Mister" drove "the hearse" slowly. Immediately in its rear walked, bareheaded still, and as walks the somnambulist, Professor Jovanny's daughter. The instant that the Rioba had said, "Sure! You shall go with it!" she had not offered to interfere with the shutting-up, at last from her view, of her dead father's body, nor had she opposed the removal of it in the dismembered piano. The Rioba himself walked a pace to the right. Somehow the Rioba had very much the air of a young man dimly aware that he is moving toward an emergency. A miscellaneous crowd lengthened out in the rear.

The flame of the pine-wood torches filled the evening air, playing strange tricks with the tree-shadows. Professor Jovanny's funeral *cortège* soon tended to wax straggling and unsteady. In fact, the liberty of outside locomotion and potations of strong waters had begun to battle against further decorum. Fragments of ribald songs, unseemly pranks and

crude hilarities broke out behind intermittently. At one stage of the progress, no small part of the procession seceded; to witness the settlement of a "melancholy dispute for precedence between two of Yellow Bear's foremost citizens"—as their obituaries in the next day's "Intelligencer" recorded.

Nevertheless, the cavernous hole, dug for the reception of poor Professor Jovanny, nailed away in his bulky sarcophagus, yawned at last, down a little declivity under a clump of firs.

"How big? Oh, dig her big enough fer—fer a hoss!" had been Dennison's prudential injunction to the committee of grave-diggers. In their zeal, they had excavated a pit that was abysmal. The crowd gathered about, holding up the torches. Dennison and "Mister" superintended carefully the lowering of the coffin—a feat accomplished not without difficulty. Yellow Bear was, by this time, too weary of affliction and, it is veracious to add, was more or less too inebriated to think of carrying out those vague religious or municipal ceremonies that had been discussed.

The first shovels of clay were discharged into the black depth. Then all at once, with that most merciless of earthly sounds suddenly breaking the stillness, the desolate mourner's soul awoke from its long lethargy—to active grief. The girl uttered a forlorn, appealing cry. "My father! O God, my father!" came from her white lips interrupted by sobs and tears, under which she bowed crouching down upon the earth, in an agony of loss and loneliness. Then no word more. The Rioba stood with his head bent suspiciously near to her

side. Dennison towered opposite.

The crowd had dispersed before the work of "filling in" was ended. The girl would not be moved until all was over. Rioba Jack did not shift from his own station. At last, however, the shovels were thrown aside. The few men left, beside the Rioba and Dennison, began relieving each other of the torches, or collecting the tools.

"Come, my poor gal," said the Rioba, with an unconscious but wondrous tenderness. The sound of his voice seemed to give the kneeling girl strength. She nodded her bowed head, she checked her sobs piteously, and presently she rose. Still keeping her wet eyes averted from the flaring lights, she half-turned toward the Rioba. And then she put out her hand!

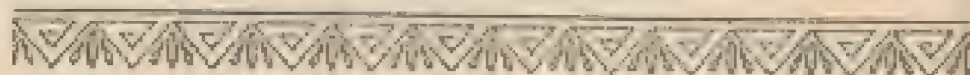
The Rioba took the hand as if it had been that of an angel. But Dennison, who had been the most attentive of spectators, approached. The Rioba looked, and discerned at his back, holding a torch, the swart face of Sally Rosenblume whom the other man had selected as consignee of the orphan.

"Look-a-here, Jack!" exclaimed the proprietor of the Cosmopolitan abruptly, standing squarely a few yards in front of the Rioba—"it strikes me as it's about time now for you and me to turn over Jovanny's gal here to one of her own sect. She needs a mother's care now—a mother's. Not a father's—except her own; nor yit a—a brother's."

The Rioba understood the situation as definitive. He changed his position, and looked Dennison squarely in the eyes. With great coolness, he drew the young girl's arm through his own. He had settled

upon his course of action, while he had been walking with the procession. He baulked not. Pointing straight at Sally Rosenblume's puffy, oily countenance, he ejaculated, "A mother!"—with ineffable scorn; and then added concisely: "Dennison, I p'rpose to be responsible henceforth 'n forever for this here young woman! If you or any other man objects to my bein so, well—all I've got to say is that that only a damn dirty cur—like you—could have the face to object. Get out of my road, or"—

With a face whereon flashed out in a second all his pent-up wrath, Dennison brought his pistol from behind his back and fired. But passion made his aim less true than that of the unscathed Rioba; who, entirely on his guard to meet what he had designedly provoked, fired almost simultaneously—and laid Dennison dead at his feet.



(TO HARRY HARKNESS FLAGLER)

ONCE : BUT NOT TWICE

" BUT WAS I FALSE, OR WERE YOU UNTRUE,
NEVER WAS ANY FRIEND LIKE YOU ! "

(*Christian Burke*)

I.

THE five o'clock evening-express from New York came swiftly into the little railroad-station at Marengo, with all the assurance marking its daily advent. The lamps in the cars twinkled for the train's length, in pale accord with a clear, yellowish December sky. Against that, the roofs of the little New Jersey town, so heroically named, and the black boughs and twigs of the leafless trees defined themselves in sharp silhouettes. The winter-moon was rising. Presently the bustle of the train's incoming diminished. The "commuting" husbands, their wives, full of the day's shopping or of the *matinée*—a traveling variety troupe, billed for Marengo's town-hall "for one night only"; dog-carts, phaetons and hacks, they all filtered away presently. The last echoes of the receding train ceased among the hills.

"One minute, Mr. Jaques! Here's a letter for you," said Hampden, the postmaster, to a man stepping lightly across the station. Outside, a trap

and a trim negro boy and a nervous Gordon setter awaited this last lingerer.

Jaques held the letter under the light looking at it sharply. Disbelief gave place to surprise. Oh, he recognized the handwriting on the envelope! An odd twist came to his thin lips as he opened it. So considerable a number of closely-written sheets anybody might be excused from reading in a draughty waiting-room. Whether this entered into Jaques's decision or not, it was plain, after an instant, that he was not going to read that letter till he chose to do so. He frowned—then laughed a little, quite to himself. Years had told lightly on his graceful, easy personality and harmonious youthfulness of face. Emotions were still easily reflected in it. At last, slipping the letter into his pocket, he hurried to his trap. He set the black horse into a swinging pace. He lived in solitary comfort, not to say luxury, out on "the old Jaques place," four miles from the railroad; his boyhood's home, inherited from his father. He was thirty-four. He was practically alone in the world.

Jaques laid the letter beside his uncompanioned dinner-plate, and then went upstairs to change his coat. Either he felt no curiosity now as to the letter's contents, or else he had made up his mind still to postpone, till certain surrounding conditions pleased him. But at last he sat down to dinner. Then he unfolded the communication. The servant came and went, with less and less attention from his master. Jaques laid leaf after leaf aside, now absolutely intent on their burden. And thus did the letter run :

II.

NO.—WEST—STREET,
December 12th, 189-

Dear Saladin: [That old nickname from the writer made Jaques smile a trifle grimly.] It would be strange if you are not surprised at seeing, first, my handwriting, and second, at its flowing-out over so many pages as this communication is likely to cover. I have not written your name on an envelope, you have not addressed a line or two to me in—well, let us not reckon the unkindly period, especially to-night. Silence complete and mutual till now...

Has it been my fault or yours, old fellow? Has it been my folly or yours? That strange, that sudden difference between us! That sharp alteration in our intimacy, that I will not call a quarrel and that I dare not call a misunderstanding! At any rate, it has kept us from more than the casual bow in the street, or a few unemotional phrases, if face to face. How could it all have come about thus inflexibly? Yet stop! I do not want to ask that, or any other like enigma, to-night. Let the past be the past! Let what is bitter in it be sweetened! We still may find some talismanic bough to cast into current. Can we not try, at least?

When last I met you—a year ago—you will remember that we agreed to consider our dispute closed, even if our intimacy was not to be renewed. We had separated for little, after all!... It was understood that there was to be peace between us—a *salaam aleikoun*! Not a word about anything beyond peace, I think, at that time. Since our truce,

I have not written to you, I know, by way of holding out the olive-branch further, though I have wished to do so. But I write to night.

For to-night is an anniversary. I sit here remembering it, and listening to the rain that is sweeping across the deluged city. An anniversary of what? Dates were never a strong point with you or me during those days when, in college and out of it, you and I used to walk the highroad of life more closely together than do many near friends; crammed ourselves with law, history and political economy for occasional speeches at the primaries we now and then graced with our most sweet voices. You do not, I fancy, recall the significance of this remoter December day. Forgotten many a less auspicious hour, brushed away the separation that years have maintained, I say—"God bless you, old fellow! I first met you twenty years ago! You were twenty, and I twenty-two; each of us undergoing a special college-examination, in justifiable doubt of our respective "gettings through." Somehow we discerned, each the other, as a friend indeed; if emphatically a friend in need.

Twenty years, Saladin! A large slice out of the lives of any two mortals. "Painlessly and easily extracted," as say the dentists' signs. Yes, life is short, at its best, with a vengeance! It seems almost a pity to the man that childhood wastes so much of it. Is that brutal? Is it unkind to one's youth, I wonder? But oh, for living gayly and carelessly, quite as a cheery animal, the years seem ample!—while for doing what a man can do, for thinking what a man may think, for taking up what

is worth the picking, for casting aside things not worthy our carriage, the space allowed is too brief! Childhood and boyhood, shirk and shorten so much!

Twenty years!.. They have altered us little, I believe. At least you, whom I have rarely seen for seven of them I am assured, by common friends, luckier than I, are wonderfully unchanged in your outward self. A few lines in your face, a little deepening of the setting of your clear eyes, a trifle more girth to your figure—that seems to others' sight and to mine about all. So Harrison often tells me. Harrison was always jealous of you, including your good looks; and I venture, to believe bears a little of that rankle to-day. As for me—well, my long illness of two years ago, has thinned me—somewhat. I haven't been able to take the world and fate so carelessly as you. Newspaper-work is not the easiest. A man ages in writing even love-stories. Still, I believe my glass and —with a reasonable discount—my acquaintance, when they wag the finger at me also as one with whom Time has dealt somewhat delicately. "By cracky, Macray!" exclaimed Lancaster, when I encountered that old cham of ours, the other evening—"By cracky! But *you* ain't changed a mite since we were all graduates together up town! Beats all!" I stood treat handsomely for Lancaster after this flattering unction. I quote that declaration of his (Lancaster is bald and just as gawky and shrewd and eccentric as to his cravats and deportment as of old) because it bears on—well, my forthcoming request.

Ah, my dear Saladin! What matters it whether our consulship of Plancus be very remote, or even

if the almond tree's flourishing is imminent, provided a friendship between a man and his brother-man stand unweakened the test of time? It is much if one human heart, which we have long ago grappled to our own with hooks of steel, is still dear and still intelligible to us. "Nothing is better than love," says Swinburne's hapless leper. I say amen to that, if it always means a regard so well-placed—a passionate, virile affection as sincere and tried, and a unity of ideas, of tastes, likes and dislikes as close as ours—was! Nothing *is* better than love!—when it can knit souls as happily, each for the other, as seemed our mutual fortune.

For, college-days over, and each of us reading law—rarely thinking it, I am sorry to believe—day by day in old Judge Gates's office, and spending our nights where and how we listed, what an inseparable "team" we made? We haunted the avenue, each fine afternoon. Our hats went off to the same acquaintances, who must have smiled at never greeting one of us without the other. Do you recall those regular Saturday nights at the theater, you paying conscientiously for the tickets one week, I for the next?—by which device we managed to see and criticise and grow enthusiastic or disgusted over pretty much everything in New York worth seeing. And over plenty that wasn't! How we sparred concerning favorite actors and actresses! How we strove to convert each other from aesthetic opinions that seemed fearfully erroneous! And our simple adventures! Do you remember the night when the young lady fainted while seeing Vera Hall as Alixé? You gallantly bore that sweet creature out into the lobby,

with her father, afterward confessing to private concern if you weren't meeting the future Mrs. Jaques under such interestingly romantic circumstances? (Not so, however.) How exactly we used to follow the stage-business, tracing each detail of a performance from our favorite front-seats! We felt as if we were quite part of the piece, as if we represented that "special public" which comedians most devote themselves to entertaining. Oh those old theatrical nights! The worst play would go with a good grace under such auspices to-day. Theaters I seldom attend now; and I never come back from any in a tenth part of that satisfaction which you and I used to experience! But that, I suppose, is only natural, for it is—youth! How is it with you?

Certainly, vary as our tastes and predilections might where the plays and play-actors came into consideration, there was seldom a point of difference, an unshared like or dislike where music was concerned, during our long and enthusiastic servitude to it. Almost a servitude it was! Was ever so omnivorous a musical craze? How we used to sit side by side, spell-bound through often, I fear, indifferent performances of our favorite operas! To walk slowly home, in starlight, softly whistling Gounod, or raving Verdi, or carried away headlong by the tide of Wagnerism! What endless musical jests and allusions and quotations we kept oscillating between us, each a little *Leitmotif* of our intimacy. It puzzles me to-day to tell just when we first took to calling a certain prima-donna, of impaired excellence, the Sweet Squealer! Or a barytone of note, whom it was our fortune to hear pretty often, "the good Adolf"—his personal

reputation bring so exactly the contrary to anything good." Rather diffidently, but with an innocent curiosity and much self-gratulation, we found our ways behind the awful operatic curtain; and so flourishing our little Italian and French and German, we fairly penetrated Bohemia, with some misgivings but increasing delight; coming to know a few Fausts and Fidelios and Brünnhildes and Valentines—stalwart men of family, or matronly mothers.

But such musical evenings and the sweet sound of those orchestras and singers that fifteen years make into matter of *à travers chants*, are less tenderly green in my thought than our quiet hours of duets and extemporizing and—oh, audacious word!—composing together, in that quiet roomy second floor back we shared. On rainy evenings it often held a great deal of happiness. What a pair we were to work our course together through Mozart's E Flat Symphony, *à quatre mains*!—or become most stupendously excited in storming through the finale of Beethoven's Fifth! Trembling with an ecstasy, that two high-strung young natures made no attempt to conceal, whole nights went to Schumann to Schubert, to Brahms, to Tschaikovsky, to Franck! To this day, I can never hear Brahms's noble Third Symphony but I am carried back to one evening when we first played it through together. You jumped up from the stool in pure excitement, crying out that the slow movement was too wonderful!—you could play it no longer! I had to pacify your strained nerves and regulate my own at the same time. Were we a pair of fools—or not? I think not. A-propos I have always felt that you and I—thanks to our charming

friend Kriesch, from Vienna, were among the earliest american converts to Bruckner,—outside of discerning professional enthusiasts. By the by, we never were informed how the few other people in that house relished those long protracted *musicales*. I don't know. If they objected they never complained. If they suffered without complaint, let us give them the martyrs' crown of stoical patience, or of a vast civility.

The other day I came across that set of "Variations" you wrote, printed (at your own expense, of course) and dedicated to me. It was not dusty in the portfolio. By it lay some waltzes and songs we "collaborated." Upstairs, I am sure, rests in secure tranquility, our bold attempt at nothing less than an operetta; which however did not advance beyond its first act.

Do you "keep up your music" nowadays? There is always a piano in my rooms. Sometimes exceedingly good music is thence evolved by others; none, good or bad, by me. I have not touched a keyboard in two or three years, save one Sunday last summer. It was down at a little church, on Long Island. The organist asked me to "try" the instrument. First I said "no." Then I said "yes." So I played the collection-boxes up and down the narrow aisle, with the "Andante quasi Largo," in A Flat major, that you wrote down, one spring evening long ago. I was glad I did not have to use my eyes for any notes....

What an endless stock of other than artistic jokes and passwords we two kept current! Fragments of them recur to me, often enough; some that I can no longer establish with their trivial meanings.

Do you remember how we always termed a dollar a "Rosina"; for some trivial and now—to me—unaccountable reason? Why should we never have alluded to a certain worthy elderly gentleman except as "The B-a-a-dger?" Or to an equally worthy hostess (whom we both heartily respected, but whose vagaries amused us) save as "The Old Angel? Or why to dignified Miss Beatrice B— not otherwise than under that allegorical phrase, of stern significance, "Die Eiserne Jungfrau?" To whom save you and me, could the geographic term "Cilician" possess so mirthful a significance?... I should tremble for that intellect attempting to unravel the mazes of all our figures of speech, our bywords, *ad dementiam!* Foolish all these trifles. But all were follies much better than some that amuse other chums; and all of a sort that we can smile at to-day without a blush. And our music kept us from learning steps in sundry *danses macabres* that might make us limp nowadays.

Your singular tact, your simplicity of tastes and of nature kept your money from being the barrier between us that wealth is so often between friends. I had but just enough; you had so much! To the last, delicately, you were so like the gentlemen of the old days you used to delight to read of, that I never thought of your riches save as an accessory to yourself, the gilt frame that was nothing compared to the portrait it protected. Yet how gracefully, in a score of matters, here and there, did you smooth my way for me, week in and week out? You used to lighten this or that passing burden, bestowing now one now another pleasure, otherwise not for us both—as if from some vague source to

which I could not even return my thanks.

It is said that in all friendship exists the leader and the led. Which led in ours? Who set the pattern oftenest, for thoughts or acts? I do not believe there was much precedence there. It seemed as if the same notions came to us at the same instants. Did ever two men come to understand one another as we did—words, looks, even thoughts, it often seemed—or get to catch the very elevation or depression of our emotional atmospheres, as if by an invisible barometer? Ah, I can see myself, once more, hurrying up town to our den, some afternoon when I was delayed!—or coming up the stairs late of an evening! As I opened the door, and caught sight of your face, of your attitude—presto! I looked toward life, as did your spirit, not a bit perhaps as mine had done a moment earlier! So was it with yourself, in your turn, I know well.

There is a little poem, by that graceful writer known as "Christian Burke" (a pseudonym, I believe) entitled, I think, "Estranged;" in which a man, soliloquizing earnestly, sadly, as to a broken friendship apostrophizes the absentee somewhat thus—I don't quote accurately, I have not the book at hand:

"Had we parted in wrath and scorn,
Each might have sought the other's grace,
And meeting suddenly, face to face,
A nobler love been born.
But vainly shall ye seek for fruit
When the tree's dying at the root!"

Saladin—our tree has never been in the way of dying! You know that—I know it. You feel that—

I feel it... It is always vigorous despite our proud neglect ; evergreen and immortal as the Tree of Life ! Friend, friend!—let us water it again, let us prune it again ! Let us stir it again into leaf, flower and fruit—for the rest of our lives ! It were a crime to do otherwise now. Come—be fellow-gardener with me again!—to rejoice under the shade of verdure so fair, and of apples surpassing those of the Hesperides, or seen “in a picture of silver.” Will you?

Every friendship worth while is an exchange. That is a psychical and social truism, of course. But the world forgets that in truisms we are likely to discover mainsprings of all human relationships. Yes, an exchange ! For each friend gives something and receives something—in instinctive counter-gift. That something must be sufficient, and it must be felt, even if unseen and unmeasured. Thus it comes that even the most unselfish friendship has need of the calm inquiry—“Granting all affections unequal, what do I get for what I give here ? What do I give for what I get here ?” And if two friends cannot answer—satisfactorily, swiftly, joyfully to themselves, and to each other, that question of equation, they are not to one another what they best could be. They are not true friends.

You and I could always answer such an interrogation-sentimental. We knew that our friendship was not only of our hearts and lives but a thing of the logic of our hearts and lives. So many could have envied that double aspect of it, Saladin !

Then came your betrothal, and your wedding. That calamity, for such it was to me, was not sudden. I foreknew it awhile. I faced it with a rigid philo-

sophy. You divined that, but did not say so. I had always anticipated your marriage with your cousin. I admired her heartily. But when she and I regarded each other as rivals—for such we were—when I knew that another and more passionate emotion than our regard must push mine to the wall, must pass by rejoicing, I was heart-sore. I hated the world! Do many friends have such strange talks as was that last one of ours? "All shall be the same! Do you not see it?" You asked, it half-apologetically, pleadingly. And then I answered sharply: "No, no nothing is the same!... You have always known my views as to that! I will not have *such* a friend's heart divided! I will not be content with *such* a friend's secondary intimacy. Spurious confidence! It is bound to be that forever henceforth. Divided heart!—I had rather have none! The day you marry, you go your ways and I mine; diverging step by step, but ever diverging. It is the end!" The end I made it, apace—I, not you. Love and pride are old yokemates.

That reason—yes, and the other reason. The other reason, too But there!—*férjünk más tárgyra!*

Well—why have I thus run through this story of our past, your story and mine, just this particular night?—while the rain falls in chill torrents over these New York's roofs, and you are, I dare say, reading Balzac or a London review, in the somber library at the Manor. (I remember the fine old house so clearly. I dare say it is not changed by an article of furniture since I last saw it, nearly ten years ago.) I have written, first, because the tale has lengthened pleasantly under my hand, has surrounded my table here with such kindly ghosts of the past!

It has so warmed away from my heart all disagreement, all torpor of long severance, that I fancy it may do the same for you. (Has it?) And, second, because I have a pertinent favour to ask of you—the last point in this long letter of retrospect.

This is the favour.

You are alone now—too much alone, I fear. So am I. What sundered us—material or immaterial—has vanished.... Can we not make the psychologic experiment of reviving our old selves?—of leading them up from the past, at least in some measure?—of adapting them to the present? Can not we bring about once more some part of the harmony, the intimacy that, I am sure, has never been matched for either of us, otherwise and cannot be so? Come, Saladin! Let us be wise, in what yet is left of our time! The years have not been so many, after all. So much of our earlier identities holds good still that our imaginations, our wills, need not strongly be called into exercise. Surely never was there a more auspicious hour for such a *redivivus*!... Can we not begin to see each other much as once we did? Define how well we can pull together to-day? Beliefs, tastes, all the souvenirs of our former community of spirits—these are still our capital to draw upon in so piquant an experiment. Piquant? It is a frivolous word! Let it stand for my writing a more earnest one.

To be practical—can we not agree that, for some months to come, you and I will resume, so far as is possible—as it happens, it ought to be decidedly free for both—the old intimacy? You have good servants at the Manor. Leave the house more to them. Spend half of your week—every other

day and night if you can (every day and night if you will) here with me, in our old roomy quarters, that I have merely widened and made yearly more habitable as beseems a prosperous journalist, like my present self. Or, a night or so in each week the Manor shall find me under its roof. Instead of the review or the newspaper, we will take up Mozart and Schumann and Saint-Saëns, Debussy and Rachmaninoff and Macdowell and Wagner according to old or new lights. And even Society shall see us again, old man! If most of the fair-faced girls we used to bow to are married and become matriarchs, if many of the men be in portly fatherhood, *n'importe!* all the faces will not be strange to us, nor will we tread alone many deserted banquet halls. Come, then! Try this novel experiment with me! Try it, Saladin! It ought to succeed! Be it a true remainder of life to both of us—that new world which is our old, that old world which shall be our new!

Let us be business-like, and begin this happy intent with—an inaugural. Next Friday night's opera is "Aida". Here is a ticket. Look at it. Do you recognize the check-number? Our old seats, Saladin! I induced the management to send me the same chairs in the same row. (One of them will be at your service for the rest of the season.) I have an unpostponeable dinner with a business-friend early that evening, so I cannot ask you to meet me here. But I will not be seated late. At a few minutes before the curtain rises, I want you to come sauntering down the aisle, in your old way—looking as nearly as may be your old self,—just as you used to do on evenings when we did not dine together

before the opera. You will slip into your chair, you will clap your hand on my knee, exclaiming : " Well, old man, is it going to be good to-night, do you think ?..." And we will walk home together after the music is done, "talking it over together." 'Later—well, we will talk over, more or less—if its worth while—we wont need to waste much time so, I think—whatever part of this letter, or of life, seems to need further reference. Anyhow the first step so will be taken to bring back to you and me a fellowship, a sunlight, a tranquility and a beauty that life has too long lacked ! So long lacked, it seems to me ! Though it is only a matter of some years. To find it again... will you come ? As an experiment ? As a proof that what has been once can be—twice ? That what in our case has been once should be twice, *must* be twice ?...

(Later)

I was interrupted (*absit omen!*) by an odd ill-turn—quite unimportant—just as I was about to sign this long letter. So I scratch down my name—with my heart in it—an hour later. Has my handwriting improved ? Ever yours,

DOUGLAS MACRAY."

III.

Could one have watched the expressions that pursued one another on the face of the man who read this letter, seated in that quiet room by himself, he could have had little trouble in divining the effect. Jaques did not taste even a mouthful more, presently. He soon left the man to clear away the table. He walked into his library and shut the door. He sat down before his fire and thought and thought

—looking into the bright flame that was burning now so warmingly and brilliantly—his head resting on his thin, firm hand.

Presently he rang the bell. "Telephone this message to the station at once, George," he said quietly. The man took the dispatch and withdrew. The telegram ran :

"Expect me Friday, without fail. The experiment must succeed. Once, twice, forever.


"SALADIN."

IV.

FROM THE NEW YORK "TIMES" OF SATURDAY, DEC.—, 189-

"We regret to record the death of Mr. Douglas Macray, well known through the art and literary columns of the *Signal*; which sad incident occurred suddenly on Friday evening, as that gentleman was entering his cab to go from the Century Club to the Metropolitan Opera House. The malady that so unexpectedly closed Mr. Macray's busy career was *angina pectoris*, which Mr. Macray had anticipated might some day prove fatal to him, on the briefest notice. He was taken to his apartments, not very distant, but life was extinct. An old friend of Mr. Macray's, Mr. Bertram Jaques, of Marengo, was in town to meet the deceased at the opera, and awaited him at the performance; but by Mr. Macray's continued absence Mr. Jaques became anxious, and went to his friend's residence to inquire the cause of his delay. Mr. Jaques arrived at Mr. Macray's apart-

ments, just as the body of his friend reached the house. He at once took the funeral-arrangements (elsewhere announced) in his personal charge. Mr. Macray was relatively a young man. He left no family."



(TO MRS. JAMES L. TRUSLOW)

AN ASTRAL VENGEANCE

"PER ASPERA AD ASTRA."

I.

IF there was any point upon which the village of North Salome (Massachusetts, U. S. A.)—"only seventeen miles from Boston, my dear—and such excellent trains!"—prided its suburban self it was on that freedom from unimproving recreation marking its higher and representative social life.

"The people of our best circles have never been dancers," slowly remarked the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth to Uncle Peleg Boxer and his nephew, Mr. Claudius Boxer—from New York City—on the occasion of their advent to North Salome for the summer. "Our best people have never been given to frivolous diversions—to the unintellectual in amusements. Idle sports—picnics—croquet-parties—in fact I may say—trivial frolics—ah, that aspect is quite foreign to our best social circles! Of a gratifying absence of conduct like coquetry—love of trifling conversation—idle talk for the sake of talk on the part of our ladies in North Salome—especially if young ladies—why, I am sure you and your nephew, my dear Mr. Boxer, will be

remarkably impressed. We have always been an intellectual community with it. In many details, a typical New England community. I speak with confidence."

Whether the confidence internally dismayed the two gentlemen from New York—one past sixty, the other thirty-one years of age—is a point not to be discussed for the moment. Enough to premise that at the First Congregational Church of North Salome, on the Sunday morning following arrival and those remarks of the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth, Claudius Boxer—it may be observed that he was possessed of a pair of penetrating eyes, regular features and a fine, athletic figure—made various swift studies of pew-holders around him, during prayers and portions of Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth's sermon. Upon the immediate right of Claudius, he detected the Misses Penstalke (Corinna and Olivia), who occupied the old Penstalke house on the Square. These esteemed maiden-ladies were known to be greatly interested in the study of the designs of the decorative arts of the Aztecs. Farther on sat the three daughters and two sons of Professor Webster Channing Endicott, between the paternal and maternal Endicott. The tall Professor had just published that exhaustive monograph (which has brought him enviable reputation) "Upon the Passive Resistances of Inorganic Molecules: If They Attract, How Little Do They Attract." The three Endicott girls—each in the later twenties—respectively were accomplished scholars in higher mathematics, Finnish literature and conchology. Pretty little Mrs. Holbrook, the wife of the leading lawyer of the village, sat with her clear, oddly expressionless profile just eclipsing

the faces of Helena and Gwendolyn Holbrook—in their last school-year. The Holbrooks were particularly musical; they gave notable *musicales*, at which various foreigners played and sang—and ate and drank a great deal. Helena Holbrook was a tremendous pianist, and Miss Gwen harped. Supplementary to these personages Claudius took note of Dr. Persifor Ambler and of his wife and family, the latter no farther advanced in life than knickerbockers and short frocks; of Colonel Tash and Mrs. Tash (Mrs. Tash's mother had been "a Catholic, in Baltimore"—a fact occasionally mentioned in a low voice, as somewhat detractive. Claudius examined timorously large, resolute-cheeked Miss Whinnery, the president of the North Salome Book Club. He considered the heavy beard of Judge Garland. He glanced keenly at others of intellect, dignity and social importance in the place. Upon their various traits Claudius (I have neglected to mention it) had already been sketchily and helpfully posted, in a private interview, by Tad Wigglesworth, the minister's son. The survey finished, then did Claudius Boxer suddenly exclaim in his heart "Great Cæsar's ghost!"—a classical expletive—hence suitable to North Salome.

For Claudius Boxer, member of many New York clubs, fond of cheerful evenings at theaters or opera (not too heavy) as of the Horse Show, of his fortnight or so at Old Port Comfort, efficient leader of cotillions, frequenter of the Boulevard des Italiens, of matches at Lord's—he, Claudius, was a Gallio who cared for none of the things that North Salome so much relished. Claudius Boxer was not "an intellectual young man." He had enjoyed life so far; fate

disconcerted him now with the exact alternative. Coming up to North Salome, simply as companion to an uncle, for whom the doctor had prescribed a fine and high air till autumn, Claude had expected to find the town at once sociable, wide-awake, stocked with pretty girls, full of rural sport, not lacking opportunities for flirtations upon leafy porches—nor for much else that belongs to normal life. But as our friend made his mental notes that sunshiny Sunday morning, the young man was appalled! In a flash, he comprehended Tad Wigglesworth's sympathetic warnings. He foresaw, as not before now, the kind of New England society of which he was to be a guest until October. How upon earth could he, Claudius Boxer, assume that intellectuality, that Wigglesworthism, which he saw was imperative. How could jolly Uncle Peleg endure it, get well in it? This was North Salome! There was no other North Salome than this! How bored was he fated to be! How despised and discountenanced! And what disappointments were he and Uncle Peleg sure to become to North Salomites! Certain of being pityingly avoided by everybody as two light-minded, under-educated intruders with whom any accomplished and sober circles could have no fellowship!

Moreover, the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth might have spoken far less "with confidence" of the admirable pursuits of his "young people." It seemed to Claudius, so far as his coign of vantage enabled him to determine, that there were no young people in all North Salome! Almost everybody seemed either married, or past youthful celibacy; and with those predicaments to be also prematurely old, unnecessa-

rily wise. Claudius turned over the leaves of his hymn-book. He was terrified!

And yet, one week before leaving New York, he, Claudius Boxer, had thrown himself at the head of a furious runaway team in the Park; had saved a life! But courage, like all else, has limits!...

"Once more I tell you, that if I had had the remotest notion that this little Massachusetts place was so "cultured," I'd have strangled with hay-fever in town all summer, rather than rent a broomstick in it! My breath is taken away from me, as it is!"

So exclaimed Uncle Peleg, as the two were concluding dinner, some days later. "Above all, Claude, I should have insisted on your keeping out of the matter! I could have endured the solitude for once—perhaps."

"But I couldn't have endured your absence, dear old man!" replied Claude.

"Pooh! I have spoiled your summer! Or, your own kindness of heart has spoiled it," went on Mr Boxer humbly.

"No—I shall improve by it! I shall improve—morally—intellectually—temperamentally. I shall achieve education! Don't worry. We'll expand our minds, to please North Salome! Or else we'll brace each other up, and stem the tide of popular repudiation, like heroes. But if, *if* you only could have beheld Mrs. Holbrook's surprise, when I said that I was not sure whether I had ever heard Beethoven's Third Symphony or not! And that Miss Penstalke!—the tall one who doesn't wear glasses! She gave me a smile—every shade and depth of surprise and compassion in it—when I told her last night, at the Amblers, that I had never heard of—what's his name?—oh,

Jacquemart!—nor of that fat book on symbolical sculpture! She offered to lend it to me! Do you know what *I* believe these people live for?"

"To impress each other! And to bore the Great Uncultured, like ourselves, Claude", answered Mr. Boxer reflectively.

"To convict the rest of the world of ignorance—like ours—to reprove it." I am reproved! You are reproved. All the world outside of New England and North Salome is reproved. But the question for us is—no, there are two questions! First, what is to be the measure of improvement, on our part? Second, how are we to show ourselves intelligent enough, grateful enough to reward these kind North Salome people properly, for their intellectual condescension to us—so far as we are honoured by it? Can we do anything, we, for North Salome? On intellectual lines? In exchange? We *must* show our gratitude, our intellectual gratitude, Uncle Peleg!"

Uncle Peleg pushed back his plate. He quitted his chair, and began walking up and down in the twilight, till Matilda should serve the coffee. "Listen to me, Claude—for I will tell you how," he replied, presently. But he relapsed again to his promenade in silence. With his firm tread and fine figure, Mr. Boxer was indisputably a well-preserved old gentleman. There was lurking in his eyes, as he walked, just that twinkle which indicates mischief, be a man sixty or sixteen.

"Yes, yes, Claude," he continued, tragically, "we are in for it! You and I are going to be snubbed right and left here by these erudites. Good looks will not save you, nor will gray hairs spare me. You

are still a young fellow, fond of life and stir and merry-hearted girls. I am an old fellow who cares chiefly for his morning-paper, and his novel, as literature. We are to suffer. Wait till all this village is convinced that we are "typical New Yorkers," in our "mental undevelopment," as Miss Whinnery put it yesterday, in that "paper" of hers that she read at the North Salome Spinoza Club. They will let us alone, pass us by on the other side, Claudius. Ah, after social careers of at least decent presperity, in four or five world-capitals, you and I have come to our Waterloo, my boy."

Nephew and uncle laughed. But it was plain Uncle Peleg had far more important matter to communicate. With Matilda's exit, he came around to Claudius. Planted directly before him, with his stout legs wide apart, Uncle Peleg stretched out one hand and tapped Claudius exactly thrice upon the shoulder. Ther, raising one finger solemnly to the chandelier, he spake these words: "Claude! A great moment in my life has come! An epochal moment, Claude! For. I wish you to know and to recollect a thing, which may be invaluable to us both in course of the next few weeks. I say, I want you to recollect it; but not to divulge it—not to a living soul—until I give you permission. Do you mark me?"

"Perfectly," responded Claudius, staring at his relative's portentous face, and holding his coffee-cup half-way to his lips. "What under the canopy has all at once taken hold of you—you startling old man, you?"

Uncle Peleg caught up a partially-pared orange, from a plate. He smiled upon the orange, he held it up into the air, he pointed at it with vehemence. Drawing back a step, "Claude," he resumed, gravely,

"be calm! Be composed! I know nothing of the Aztecs—or of Jaccquemart, nor of the Passive Attraction of Molecules. In the language of Mrs. Billiken, 'I will not deceive you—how could I?'—on these points. But never forget a secret which I propose—in this hour—after long years of perfectly successful reticence—after an unspeakable struggle with my native, my hydra-headed modesty—to reveal to you, dearest Claude, as my nearest in blood and in affection. Ha! ha!" ejaculated Mr. Boxer, retiring backward, and biting into a section of the orange, with a gesture worthy of Brasseur or Tarride.

Claude stared on, with actual openness of mouth.

"In astronomy, my dear Claude! In the vast, the boundless science of astronomy! In astronomy's stellar fields and—and—its stellar fields," pursued Uncle Peleg, mounting a footstool and thence gesticulating with the orange and its peel—"in my knowledge of astronomy, I yield the palm to no one! Not even to a North-Salomite! In astronomy, that master-branch of knowledge!—oh, I speak merely modestly in saying to you that I am not aware of my peer! You have never suspected—my knowledge? Of course not! Oh, Claudius, nephew, how carefully have I hidden from you, as from everyone, the noble breadth of my mentality? But believe it now—this marvelous news!—a confession wrung from my entrails by direful need only. The astronomer is born not made. *I am one of that kind.* What, indeed, is this earth in shape?" demanded Mr. Boxer, with gastronomic-astronomic relevancy: "Round, like a ball or orange." So affirmed

the simple text-books of our youth. Like any orange! This orange." And Uncle Peleg put a quarter of it into his mouth, stepped from the foot-stool and once more faced Mr. Claudius, too full for further utterance.

The two gentlemen stared at each other. An extraordinary light—enthusiasm, laudable pride, or something else—which shone out from Uncle Peleg's eye had a tremendous effect upon his young relative. Claudius, at any rate, made no verbal comment. That sparkling, prophetic gaze of Mr. Boxer held his intelligent nephew as if by fascination, for the space of a minute. Vivid is the mutual understanding of two such minds, even if something uncultivated in Finnish literature or orchestration or Andrea Mantegna. At last, with a final asseveration: "Yes, I am an astronomer! A great one! But not one syllable of it till I say the word!"—Uncle Peleg descended suddenly from his state of super-exaltation, waved his hand proudly, as one who dismisses spheres and star-depths for the time, and sat down to the cheese. He uttered no single further allusion to astronomy that evening.

Here were two men who indeed comprehended one another!

That in North Salome's cultured drawing-rooms a Waterloo indeed had arrived for the two Boxers, the next few weeks in North Salome proved beyond question. North Salome found them out. Of what merit in such New England communities are good manners and good sense, intelligence and affability, when one does not dabble in science or literature, nor coquet volubly with the arts?

Far was it from the North Salomites to waste more attentions on two gentlemen described by Mrs. Endicott as "Just typical New Yorkers, my dear!—*typical* New Yorkers!" A judicious Massachusetts village, having weighed carefully the attainments of Uncle Peleg and Claudius as "not much over and above a grammar-school-education," proceeded first to patronize; and next to drop. The community cast no overt slight on either gentleman. North Salome was too tactful for that. But it felt as Mrs. Colonel Tash expressed it, that "We really cannot *afford* to encourage people of such undeveloped mentality to come to us for their summers." The invitations to tea, sponge-cake and shallow-deep talk on deep-shallow topics diminished. Calls from the Amblers, the Endicotts and the Tashes became rare. "We have *so* little in common with New York people—especially of *their* sort," remarked Miss Hildegard Ambler who had "graduated" with high honours at Smith College. Week by week, the community closed more upon itself, with a comfortably satisfied air of "Oh, no—we would be glad to make the place pleasanter for such strangers. But we can't. They would only be uncomfortable all the time! They are so under-educated. Typical New Yorkers."

It has to be particularly stated here that no fault could be found with either of the New York intruders during this chilling process. They did their best to accommodate themselves to conditions. They beamed receptiveness, "the wish to know." They were polite, alert, serious, kindly. Uncle Peleg seemed bored by nothing and by nobody; Claudius seemed bored by nothing and by nobody. If Colonel Tash (at

last quite sarcastically) asked Uncle Peleg's opinion of a Greek quantity, Uncle Peleg smilingly looked around the circle, and admitted that he had not peeped into a Greek grammar in forty years. But he was, all the same, the most attentive listener in the group, in the Colonel's explanation of the accent agitating him. If Miss Olivia Penstalke button-holed Claudius on the topic of the immigration of the Aztecs from Aztlan, Claude looked Miss Penstalke frankly in her eye-glasses, and said with charming candor in his fresh, clear voice, "Upon my word, my dear Miss Penstalke! I don't think I've ever studied a line about the early history of Mexico! But I should be greatly interested in what you speak of, I'm sure. Pray go on." If the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth, or Professor Endicott—his short, crisp hair brushed straight up from his forehead—smiled sadly in the very middle of a sentence, and said: "But pardon me, my dear Mr. Boxer! I ought to recollect that this is a subject on which we New-Englanders do not expect our New York friends to take very much interest,"—why, Claudius or Uncle Peleg fairly laid hold of Endicott's garment, kept him at their sides, lest they should be thought weary in well-listening. One would have said that the two New-Yorkers truly hungered and thirsted for all that information of which North Salome was an encyclopedia—or a chiffonier!

But the Boxer politeness was to no purpose! North Salome, as has been said, gradually "dropped" them. It is true that there were ever a very few young ladies, undergraduates at neighbouring "female-colleges, who dared privately to confess that "Mr. Claudius

Boxer was very pleasant, if he wasn't particularly well-educated. He could talk nicely about—well, some things." Andriette Endicott remarked to Ella James that there were "really not so many bachelors in the village! And all our young men are so much alike! He—well, he is altogether different." But the mothers and fathers of North Salome were dexterous in spoiling arrangements for their daughters' participation in Claudius Boxer's unimproving company. To be sure Mr Boxer was said "to very be wealthy." Ah, but much money was not all in a marriage! No!—"A cultivated girl must marry solid culture."

But the Boxers had one staunch friend in their growing isolation in North Salome. Tad Wigglesworth, a handsome, manly fellow of nineteen, was a resident individual who felt himself desperately out of his element in North Salome's scientific ozone; and completely happy when spending evenings in the Boxers' library, where both gentlemen made him very welcome. Tad persisted in going there as often as his fancy dictated; much to his father's annoyance. Furthermore, Tad boldly went about the village, declaring that both younger and older Boxers were "splendid men—as well educated as any gentleman ever needs to be!"—"the only men in this village not prigs!—I'm not too much educated myself, I sincerely hope!" Tad used to add that, with a heartiness to shock the Reverend Nahum. It had so often been said of Tad that "he seemed such a queer sort of son for a man like Dr. Wigglesworth to have." But what of all this?—of Tad's ideas of the Boxers or of other folk? Not a timid young lady or so, nor Tad, could stem the wave of

popular disapproval of the two commonplace gentlemen from New York—the *unwise* men from Gotham. Arrived at the sixth week of residence in North Salome, Claudius Boxer and Uncle Peleg found themselves reduced to ordinary books, to the newspapers, their long, games of bezique, and to Tad Wigglesworth's wit for their evening solacements—not to include their powers of being mutually agreeable—which had been tested by a long and happy past.

Erudite North Salome! There was no parent in your demesne who did not know that a healthy child, shut up to its own devices, is sure to evolve mischief of some sort as the result. What is many an old man but a wise child? By the end of another week, Mr. Peleg Boxer had settled details of a certain grave project. Next, he spent three evenings discussing some deep secret with Mr. Claudius. In the course of the last conference the bell rang, and Thaddeus Wigglesworth darkened the door of the library. Thaddeus was bidden to sit down, to light his cigarette and to hearken. Thaddeus smoked, listened and talked. He even suggested... When any little town in New England or anywhere, is collectively a prig, the most salutary lesson that can be taught it is its alliance to simple fool. Extremes meet. Schoolmaster to North Salome, did Uncle Peleg Boxer propose to become. Vengeance is sweet, especially to the unlearned and—unintellectual.

III.

One airy, bright morning, Mrs. Ambler came briskly along before Uncle Peleg Boxer's sunny

garden. The Boxers had rented "the Abel Whittredge place". Mrs. Ambler suddenly found herself confronted by two expressmen, whose burden, a long yellow deal box, blockaded the sidewalk. A third expressman tugged at the reins, his huge, red wagon seeming exclusively freighted with other yellow deal boxes, conspicuously addressed "Peleg Boxer, Esq., North Salome, Mass." In the distant doorway of the house that gentleman was visible, watching with solicitude the advent of the carriers. Mrs. Ambler paused, partly from curiosity, partly because the long box was fast in the gate. Just then Tad Wigglesworth slipped into view, from some mysterious lodgement.

"Good-morning, Thaddeus," said Mrs. Ambler, whose tone toward Tad always hinted at her disapproval of him as a human entity. "Are your friends—the Boxers—moving? I did not know they expected to leave us so soon."

"Oh, no, not at all, Mrs. Ambler," responded the minister's son, alertly. "Wait a minute—I'm sorry the men are in your way. They'll get past in a minute. Anything like scientific apparatus has to be taken such care of, you know. Look out there, Mr. O'Hara! You've got that too much to the right!"

"Scientific apparatus?" repeated Mrs. Ambler with a faint smile. "I really didn't suppose that Mr. Boxer was interested in sciences of any sort! Pray tell me what"—

"Oh, certainly, Mrs. Ambler!" interinterrupted Tad. "This is Mr. Peleg Boxer's new telescope, that he has ordered sent up from his house in town. It ought to have come a fortnight ago."

"Telescope!" exclaimed Mrs. Ambler. "Mr. Peleg Boxer's telescope! Why, how long is it—I should greatly like to know—" her voice sunk to an incredulous murmur—"I don't mean the telescope, I mean since Mr. Boxer became an astronomer? And how is it that not a single person in this village has ever had the remotest idea that he cultivated such a study? It's very singular."

"I don't think it is at all singular," retorted Tad tartly. "Mr. Boxer has been a secretary of the Elective Astronomical Society for at least a dozen years, Mrs. Ambler. Only an amateur—but he has a reputation among professionals for good work. As for nobody's happening to find it out up here, why, it is the last subject Mr. Boxer ever speaks about! It bores him to death to talk astronomy—I happen to know—unless he is with people who are specially strong in it. There was a long note in the *Astronomical Gazette*, when he came up here in June."

Mrs. Ambler looked about her, disdainfully but worried. "Well—all I've got to say is, that what you tell me is very strange, Thaddens! I wish—I wish I had had happened to know about it before. It would have made a—difference--perhaps."

"Difference? In what?" asked Thaddens, with a faint smile.

"In—in a good many respects—perhaps. But never mind now. I'm glad to know about Mr. Boxer's astronomy and his telescope. I hope you'll tell him that I'm greatly interested in hearing that he has a taste for astronomy. My cousin, poor Horatio Sharp, was very gifted in the same way,

you know. No, I can't go up to the door to speak to Mr. Boxer just now—I'm late for the Whitman Club. Good-morning."

The box was borne into the gate, as in triumph. Mrs. Ambler hurried on toward the Misses Penstalke. She was filled with excitement.

If North Salome had made a mistake?... Mrs. Ambler never had heard of the Elective Astronomical Society. But she thought she had, and that is the same thing in your Mrs. Amblers, the wide world round, pretty often. Also—being a woman—in spite of more recondite matters to discuss with the ladies in the Misses Penstalke's drawing-room, Mrs. Ambler imparted her discovery to three or four friends, before she went home. Local comment swelled apace. "Yes, actually a member of the Elective Astronomical Society, my dear Mrs. Tash! One of those fine old English organizations, don't you know?"

The announcement spread. Incredulity gave place to unmitigated surprise and interest. Within forty-eight hours, did not all North Salome surmise that somehow it had done Mr. Peleg Boxer injustice? People "thought over the matter." They remembered that astronomy was in fact *the* one subject on which nobody had entered conversationally with either gentleman. Rumors flew about North Salome, almost as if it had been an ordinary, gossiping New York neighborhood... "Mr. Peleg Boxer had devoted his life—unostentatiously—to the heavens!" Mr. Claudius Boxer, he too was no tyro with the glass; he had been "his uncle's amanuensis—a most valued assistant—for many years." Mr. Boxer, was "in correspondence with astronomical people" all

over Christendom. He had written a book on solar eclipses, another book on nebulae. He had contributed "most abstruse papers" to "all the prominent astronomical magazines abroad." And yet his singular modesty! Tad Wigglesworth had been asked—weeks ago—not to allude to the gentleman's hobby; of course Tad had maintained silence, even to his father. But Tad now imparted various interesting bits of intelligence regarding the successful mounting of the big telescope, in a vacant room in the mansion; of Uncle Peleg's clever contrivances to make up for this or that deficiency in his improvised observatory; of the activity of the energetic scientist in getting everything ready for "some weeks of special research." A particular condition of planetary affairs—an unpredicted solar eclipse, in September—had decided him on the importation from New York.

North Salome suddenly began calling at "the Whittredge house." The invitations to tea, sponge-cake and intellectual conversation again fell into the letter-box, like leaves in Vallombrosa. All the village pined to draw out the uncle and nephew on the subject with which they must be so conversant. Mr. Boxer, Claudius and the mounting of the great telescope were the talk of the community!—Mortification was forgot in interest. True, when lured toward the subject of astronomy by wily hosts, neither Uncle Peleg nor Claudius became excessively fluent; indeed, they soon turned the talk to other matters. But nobody in the village was surprised or annoyed: Mr. Boxer was only rallied—styly, archly—by his new friends, on his diffident reticence. But the

Reverend Nahum Wigglesworth soon expressed an earnest hope that Mr. Boxer "would not keep his learning and his glass always to himself." So North Salome became garrulous in enthusiasm over a prospect of sighting Saturn and the Coal Sack and stray sun-spots through the big lenses that Tad had been "privileged to look through."

Friendly curiosity was not long ungratified. At first, excusing themselves, on the ground of the "particular work on hand," Uncle Peleg and Claudius soon remarked that friends in the place—"with an interest in astronomy—" would be welcome of a clear evening at the Whittredge house. They went further. They invited Miss Corinna and Miss Olivia Penstalke and the Reverend Nahum, one night, to "come in and take a little look at the big stars." The guests came. Nothing could have been more delicate and hospitable than their reception. They were asked to "tea"; the orange-pekoec was delicious. By-gones were all left by-gones. Conversation never flagged; though, *nota bene*, the visitors made most of it. When darkness had fairly settled in, Mr. Claudius piloted the group up-stairs, Uncle Peleg with Miss Olivia on one arm and the stately Corinna on the other, both ladies prattling tumultuously of "star-gemmed space" and its wonders. Tad Wigglesworth, who had come in hurriedly, followed the party solemnly.

Uncle Peleg ushered them all into a long upper chamber. It was sparsely furnished. Its floor was bare. But they fairly started—"Oh, mag—nificent!" exclaimed Miss Penstalke, as they discerned in the gloom above them the imposing incline of a great tube,

sweeping upward. Its mighty bore was inserted in a screen that covered both sashes of the huge double window, made available for the mounting—"a matter of some difficulty," as Uncle Peleg explained, with considerable pride in his ingenious contrivances. A few arm-chairs and several tables covered with books and astronomical charts, asserted themselves against the shins of the newcomers, who scarcely dared to move for fear of overturning something or themselves. Patches of moonlight revealed on either side temporary bookcases, heavily curtained, and the outlines of globes and inexplicable machinery. The hour and place were alike thoroughly in accord with intellectuality concentrated on a stimulating mystery.

"Oh, what an im-mense, what a magnificent instrument, Mr Boxer!" exclaimed Miss Olivia. "Surely it seems almost like some mighty creature—endowed with its own noble intelligence!"

"Yes, you really might name it," observed Miss Corinna from the depths of a wicker-chair. "Some thrilling name!"

"Name it, my dear Miss Corinna?" replied Mr. Boxer amiably, as he moved about with his nephew, preparing the way for the evening's exhibition—

"Well, perhaps one might! Suppose now, we were to call it Nemesis—the revenge of science to-day upon pride, finalism, arrogance of mind, human conceit, popular ignorance in the past—or present?"

"Admirable!" exclaimed the Reverend Wigglesworth. "These are wondrous days in which we are living, dear friends—wondrous!" He softly cited a verse from Job. The ladies murmured "Marvellous! Ah, ma-a-ar-vellous!" Miss Olivia put

her hand in her pocket, forgetful of the darkness, for her ready note-book, as a pleasingly poetic idea sidled into her brain. "You *do* express things so imaginatively, dear Mr. Wigglesworth!"—she ejaculated softly.

"I must ask you, dear friends," observed Mr. Boxer presently, after prevailing on Miss Olivia to seat herself first at the eye-piece—"I must ask you to let me confine attention to the moon and to Jupiter this evening. As you may have heard, I am pursuing some serious researches this summer; I rather prefer not to be diverted from them, especially with such imperfect apparatus for using my glass as I have had to improvise here."

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Boxer!" came the assent from the dim circle about him.

What an hour of enchantment ensued for those favored and appreciative guests at the Whittredge house! Never had Reverend Nahum, never had the Misses Penstake been so swept away by ebullient rapture; not even when Professor McFulkie, of the Edinburgh University, had delivered that widely celebrated course of lectures on the Myth of Ceres. The startling power of Mr. Boxer's great glass! What wonders of color and light! What belts of green and purple and red! What vivid expanses of pale silver and of iridescent gold shimmered and shone through that magical bore! The guests sat before it, turn and turn about, an hour and a half. They went home incoherently grateful and enthusiastic, after "an unforgettable evening."

A gentle ferment agitated North Salome next day, in consequence of joint and several accounts.

Many grave pairs of eyes stared at the gables of the Whittredge house, as if it had been the abode of Galileo, Kepler, Brahe and Newton successively. But there was nothing scientific about three brick chimneys and two rows of old-fashioned windows, with yellow holland shades. The room used as Uncle Peleg's observatory was in the rear.

Other invitations to *séances* with the celestial systems were presently extended, to different little coteries. Nothing scientific ever had stirred up more solemn chat and well-bred rivalry in North Salome. By the middle of September, a large proportion of the literary and intellectual people of that community had looked through the great telescope. Uncle Peleg and Claudius, however, declined courteously most of the civilities now urged on them, in return for their hospitable popularization in North Salome of the wisdom of the stars. When the nights were fine, the observatory received visitors; the Boxers felt obliged to pay deference to interest or curiosity; though the continuing of the "researches," which had induced Uncle Peleg to mount his telescope in the village, had to be actively prosecuted. Still—seldom were uncle or nephew, or the big glass, "not at home." Night after night, the neighbors dropped in, informally, after the town-clock had struck nine; hoping for a little more star-gazing. Welcomed and piloted up-stairs to the long room with its shaded lights and majestic instrument, guests sat down in gratification and respect. The telescope, by the by, was uniformly directed toward but one or two of the heavenly spheres. The trouble that it would give Mr. Boxer to shift his instrument and to interrupt

his private observations was fully understood and excused.

It is true that in the chorus of admiration for Mr. Boxer—of his modesty, his courtesy, and the privileges vouchsafed by his splendid instrument—there were a few false notes. There were some critical townspeople who hinted that the taciturnity of both the Boxers on the general topic of astronomy "was ridiculous." Others went further, and murmured against the telescope, declaring that its perfectness must be exaggerated. There surely was a curious unlikeness in some jovian and selenic details, for instance, to approved representations in standard works on the planetary systems. But these cavillings were rare. North Salome was most prompt to silence such idle sneers.

The whole tide of public approval, just as strong as had been that of antipathy, now was poured forth upon Mr. Peleg Boxer and Claudius, albeit each of New York City; that town of trade, two hundred and thirty-four miles from the Only Modern Athens. Personally and scientifically, the two foreigners from it, were clasped to North Salome's well-starched bosoms. They were "asked everywhere" now; but only when they "could" went they there. More complimentary than this, astronomy became the fad, the passion of the season, in North Salome. Aztecs, Italian *serenate*, molecular attraction,—all gave place to it. Just as another neighborhood is attacked by lawn-tennis, by photography, by the Baconian theory, so became North Salome *fiévreuse* on the stars. The Book Club bought volumes treating only the subject—popularly. On Sundays, the favorite morning-hymn

was frequently "The Spacious Firmament on High". It invariably drew tears to the eyes of the Penstatke sisters. All the little Endicotts caught rheumatism, lying on their backs, out on the lawn, one night, quarrelling over the shapes of the constellations. But most exhilarating outcome of the epidemic was the embroiling of the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth and Colonel Tash in that melancholy controversy about the Equinoctial of Queubus; in which Shakespearean phrase the clergyman discovered a planetary meaning. The dispute cut short social intimacy between the households of pastor and his deacon—forever! The Ambler family were unfortunately drawn into the war, ere they realized its virulence. The *North Salome Watchman* offered long "Communications," in each issue. The Retort Courteous, the Quip Modest, the Quarrel Absolute came swiftly on. The houses of Wigglesworth (Tad excepted) Ambler and Tash are not on speaking terms to this day, greatly to the discomfort of their North Salome friends, who give such handsome tea-fights.

At this time, too, did Miss Olivia Penstatke publish (at her own expense, *Watchman* print) her little brochure, "Half-Hours with Luna," in which production there is not so much astronomy as a great deal of dulcet verse and refined sentiment; besides a long and vaguely tender dedication—"To my honoured friend, Peleg Boxer, E. A."

But time—ordinary or astronomical—passes on. And so came, at last, the final weeks of our friends' sojourn in such cultured air. Endeared to the village as they had become, North Salome was loath to part with them. In fact, both Miss Corinna and Miss

Olivia Penstalke (at different convenient opportunities) had hinted severally to Uncle Peleg and to Claudius that domestic delights often sweetly supplemented those of the intellect; and that such, along with "a handsome old property," were quite obtainable, then and there, in North Salome. But neither of the gentlemen from New York sighed for such a New England Capua. They must go thence. The days sped. Farewell calls and last tea-drinkings were duly gone through. A smart banquet was tendered Mr. Peleg Boxer, by the famous North Salome Scientific Academy. And a complimentary breakfast was insisted on by the township Historical Association. Every expression of social reluctance to permit a man to depart from the vicinity who so had contributed to the cultured interests of the summer, was reiterated in each circle of the place. Claudius Boxer's name also shone with a farewell radiance scarcely less glorious. It may be added that a subscription to purchase the great telescope, to make it permanently available in the Whittredge house, (presently to be turned into a local "Athenaeum") was set on foot—injudiciously; suppressed on the owner's declaring that he would not under any circumstances part with his choicest possession.

IV.

The morning of departure arrived. It was a gray, cold October day. North Salome had taken leave of Mr. Peleg Boxer and Claudius the preceding night, by nothing less than a symposium at the Lyceum. There had been much flourishing of pocket-

handkerchiefs and loud hand-clapping when Uncle Peleg, in a few modest sentences, promised—"if it should be desired"—to come to the village in course of the winter, to deliver a formal lecture on "Contemporary Modifications of the Planetary System." Over the report—for the pages of the *Watchman*—of the night's gathering sat the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth, pen in hand. Mr. Peleg Boxer was announced.

"My dear Mr. Wigglesworth—" began the old gentleman, hurrying into the study, dropping his gladstone and umbrella, his rosy, smooth-shaven face rubicund with haste and concern—"I am ashamed to trouble you! But upon my word—! I believe I must come to you for a favor."

"A favor? With much pleasure, dear Mr. Boxer!" returned the minister with alacrity. "Name it, I beg."

"It is with regard to my big telescope," continued Uncle Peleg. "You see, my nephew and I had no notion of leaving the village to-day until the four o'clock train. The men from Van Blitz's are to come up from Boston in an hour or so, to dismount and ship the glass—to town. I would much prefer to overlook them, of course. Here comes to us a telegram calling Claudius and myself to New York as soon as we can possibly reach it! Indeed, we ought to get there early in the afternoon—though we can't. Now, since we must take the morning-express—could I—dare I—venture to"—

"To ask me to superintend operations?" interrogated Mr. Wigglesworth. "Why, certainly I can! Without the least inconvenience! Don't think of staying over. Only, my dear Mr. Boxer, I doubt if I shall be of definite practical use. I am not con-

versant with optical machinery! I have never even seen your instrument in daylight."

"Oh, that's all right, I am sure!" Uncle Peleg replied briskly. "The men will attend to all the details. But I think it better to have some responsible friend near them, while they are in the house—workmen, you know, are apt to trifle if they feel themselves absolutely alone. You really could be there? So kind! Really, I can't say how indebted I shall be! Good-bye! My kindest remembrances once more to everybody. *Good-bye.*"

With a handshake, Mr Boxer departed hurriedly to the railway-station. Claudius and Thaddeus were awaiting him there. A few subdued sentences and one or two suppressed outbreaks of something like inexplicable mirth followed. Then the express thundered up. Tad waved his two New York friends a gay adieu. North Salome was destined to behold them no more!

Two hours later, the Rev. Mr. Wigglesworth laid aside his writing. He put on his large, decorous silk hat, and met the three men from the Van Blitz establishment, admitting them with his own ministerial hands to the deserted Whittredge house. On the way thither, Mr. Wigglesworth was a trifle surprised to learn that Van Blitz & Co. had never had any business-dealings with Mr. Peleg Boxer.

"Never heard of the party, sir," asseverated the head-functionary. "Mr. Wadd, our first superintendent, said that he knew nothing of him. A New Yorker, I believe?... So!... Well, some New York glasses are very fair—not bad glasses. But of course if you want a good instrument, Boston beats all."

They went up-stairs and set to work.

Toward the evening of that eventful day, North Salome was shaken to its center, first by mere report, then by a definite and astonishing story. This story flew about like one of the pestilent arrows of Apollo—north, east, south and west, in all the sober limits of the village. It grew so hideously circumstantial by supper-time, it went on gaining such awful details from every narrator, that after dusk almost each important—or self-important—inhabitant of the place seemed to set out frenetically to settle the source and value of the tale—for better or worse!

Alas! The worse—the worst—was speedily established as true of this extraordinary rumor—"Incredibly true!" as Mrs. Tash ejaculated. A tempest of anger and outraged *amour propre* swelled in the once self-satisfied and pacific Massachusetts town. The leading members of the Lyceum, the entire Book-Club, the North Salome Literary Academy, the Historical Association—what not else?—all were quivering in their righteous indignation; and Miss Olivia Penstalke was in her bed with hysterics. The names of Mr. Peleg Boxer and of Claudius Boxer, uttered in the dwellings of the intellectually elect, were coupled with every adjective by which "really well-bred people" express surprise, disgust and scorn.

What had effected this marvelous and final veering of *Stimmen aus dem Publikum*? Why is it that, unto this day, the name "Boxer" may not be mentioned welcomely in North Salome? The following facts answer the question.

When the workmen from Van Blitz & Co. were ushered into the silent room in the Whittredge house,

and introduced to their task, they were bewildered, then convulsed—with Homeric merriment. All three declared Mr. Boxer's great glass to be such as their amplest experience had never encountered. Still, they attempted—in a perplexed and cautious way—to dismantle it."

Thereupon all at once rose a fresh explosion. Mr Wigglesworth caught hold of a table for support. The telescope had—no lenses!

None! Its capacious tube was intersected with disks of fine, plain plate-glass, brilliantly polished, devoid of all refractive value. Moreover, the tube itself was of wood and pasteboard, and absolutely immovable. To have followed the course of moon or of star for an hour (the superintendent pitilessly informed the Rev. Nahum, who stood by, wild-eyed and open-mouthed) was "just idiotic impossibility." But a more appalling confirmation of this truth ensued.

"Good gracious! Look here!" came the shout of one of the party, from the step-ladder. "There isn't any window in this wall!" And there wasn't any! For, on pulling down the curious screen into which the upper end of the glass had entered (the necessity of which screen Uncle Peleg had lucidly explained to his guests) the blank, kalsomined wall faced the party. A shuttered dummy-window did duty outside!

Last of ail, the rude hands of Van Blitz & Co. pulled into view an astonishing collection of mirrors, lanterns, gorgeous tatters of silk and satin, confusing daubs on paper, tinfoil and silver gauze! Need one ask the part that these had played in the summer's astronomic farce? These were the fund-

amentals of those shimmering vistas of "the moon and Jupiter" which had so engrossed the eyes of Mr. Peleg Boxer, and had fascinated those of his visitors. An amazing tangle of fine cordage, electric wiring and colored glasses, all controllable from particular sources, reached up into the safe obscurity that had always enshrouded the distant "objective." It was an apparatus to reflect great credit on a certain theatrical scene-painter and stage-manager of Mr. Boxer's acquaintance; a gentleman that had often visited the New Yorkers in course of the summer. Over such handiwork had North Salome waxed ardent! Over such a vile fraud were the families of Tash and Ambler and Wigglesworth at logger-heads, beyond hope of pacification! Woe worth the day! But there was nothing to be done now. Like Scandinavian deities, Uncle Peleg, and Claudius and their expert friend had constructed a celestial system to suit their own convenience. I will not undertake to recount the remarks of the workmen from Van Blütz, as they proceeded that morning!

But insult was added to insult, injury to injury, by the Reverend Mr. Wigglesworth's pouncing upon a letter, sealed and directed—"To Whomsoever This Shall Come." He tore it open and read, standing there aghast, haggard, in the midst of the débris caused by the sudden fall of Uncle Peleg's little moon—plaster of Paris—a beautiful article. The letter courteously bid adieu to North Salome and to astronomy, as well as to all other scientific study. It incidentally admitted that there never had been any such association as the "Elective Astronomical"; reminded any persons concerned that a little learning had long

ago been reckoned a dangerous thing ; and that if it ever led a well-meaning New England, or other, community to intellectual snobbishness, oh, far, far better to be ignorant and polite ! The letter was in blank verse—and not signed.

V.

The word "astronomy" was hardly uttered in North Salome for about two years. Many impulsive people could not bear to use opera-glasses. Still, popular mortification gradually cooled down. North Salome is to-day quite as self-possessed, self-centered and self-conceited as ever it was ; quite as prompt to hold itself up as intellectually that "typical New England community," the atmosphere of which is too rarefied for aliens. One evening, Tad Wigglesworth, by that time through college, carelessly mentioned at a supper-table that he had heard of Mr. Claudius Boxer's marriage, in Paris, to a young Southern lady—a Miss Barnes-Steel, he believed. No one at the table spoke for a moment. But presently the Rev. Nahum said solemnly, turning his spectacles upon his son : "I did not chance to see that item in the paper, Thaddeus. Surely communication has not subsisted—without my approval—between you and—and those gentlemen ? Especially should I regret it, since you visit the French capital so soon—for a sojourn of, I trust, educational value."

Tad's disclaimer was prompt, in spite of a flushed face, and a hasty glance at a friend of his from Washington, who was visiting North Salome. Nevertheless, about a year later, after Thaddeus had

got well at work in New York, the Misses Penstalke encountered him on Fifth Avenue, one spring afternoon. He was not alone. His companions were Mr. Peleg Boxer, brisk as a boy of sixteen—Claudius—and, upon the arm of Claudius, a young lady, handsome and indefinably unscientific-looking—yet with a face full of intelligence as well as beauty, and certainly owner of a pair of eyes brighter than any stars yet mapped. Miss Olivia bridled, Miss Corinna stared. Then they bowed hesitatingly to Thaddeus; and cut the remaining male contingent of the quartet unqualifiedly. But the Boxers, all the trio, they survived; having survived so much before it from North Salomites. Perhaps that fact, along with this record, can best conclude with the hope that all "merely typical New Yorkers" who may happen to pass the summer in the rarefied atmosphere of such a New England locality, may possess constitutions to sustain social experiences more or less similar.



(TO LEONARD BACON)

"MADONNESCA"

AFTER another look, I came up quickly to where General Labride was standing with my friend Lieutenant Imre von N—. Both of them were chatting; glancing intermittently at the groups of more or less smart and lively guests circulating, that late afternoon of November, in the drawing-rooms of Lady Overcrowe. It was Lady Overcrowe's first musicale of the season, in Rome. Musicales given by Lady Overcrowe were always worth going-to, because of the artists and the audiences. The artists were always eminently select; the audiences invariably the contrary. In fact, the people that came to Lady Overcrowe's larger gatherings resembled their hostess's rooms in the Palazzo Stellone—they were on oddly different levels. From the entrance-hall you went down two steps, to a reception-room. Thence you descended four steps, to one of the handsome *saloni*. Three more steps brought you into the furthest and and lowest room, ended by the platform for the musicians. It was an ideal arrangement for hearing and for seeing. My two friends were "up and

back " in the reception-room, looking down into the crowd. It had now broken up, for a few moments, during an intermission, after a particularly strenuous and incomprehensible "Quartet in D flat minor," for pianoforte and strings, by Angelo Johann Pechdunkel, so much in contemporary vogue as composer.

"General," I said, with the enthusiasm of youth, "you know everybody here! You will please tell me at once the name of the loveliest woman I have ever seen in my life!"

"He has said that, I don't know how many times, to my certain knowledge—of I don't know how many dozen women—all ages, sizes and colours—these ten years past!" interpolated Imre von N— ironically. "According to Esstay, each ball is quite populated by new Aphrodites—new Helens—each for my impressionable friend's admiration."

"Just which Helen or Aphrodite do you mean this time?" asked General Labride with an indulgent smile—"Lady Overcrowe's champagne-punch is not of a quality to make *à propos* my quoting Goethe's Mephistopheles—

"Du siehst, mit diesem Trank im Leibe,

"Bald Helenen in jedem Weibe".

"I mean the tall, pale lady standing by the second—no, third—big bronze candelabrum, between the two drawing-rooms. She is speaking with Jakob Samuelssohn."

General Labride followed my indication. His searching glance settled on the object of my question. In admirable contrast to the fat, drooping contours of the swarthy Jakob Samuelssohn (who asks and gets two hundred pounds for a so-called portrait)

were the face, figure and costume of a woman, indeed notably beautiful. She was conversing with the modish artist—he vivaciously, she replying in apparently a measured, reposeful manner. Tall, blonde, and somewhat pallid, the perfect oval of her face was defined exceptionally by features that were large, but clear-cut and of tranquil regularity. They were framed in abundance of soft hair, copper-red and of singular silkiness and lustre. Perhaps the proportion and harmony of her body was even more striking than the serene classicism of her face; for she was at once of a type dianesque yet feminine. She dressed with a manifest intelligence as to herself. Nothing in its way could have been more effective (and expensive) than her thin, clinging gown of dull violet tones, her hat of the same effect, with its dark bronze-green plumes, and the few but noble emeralds set in lustreless gold, her only ornaments—emeralds such as nowadays only princesses and notorious music-hall actresses are supposed to possess. Whether this lady of the emeralds was an actress or a princess I could not imagine; the less because a certain absence of definite expression in her face, despite its marmoresque pallor and repose, little suggested either a properly royal hauteur or an artistic temperament. It was a face of graciously serene sweetness; a face, in a sense, of maternity though still youthful.

"I thought so! I need not have troubled to look for your enchantress," replied General Labride presently. He spoke sharply, a disagreeable note in his voice. "She is not only the most beautiful woman in the room, but likely to be remarked among

fair women anywhere. Also she happens to be far from unknown. Unluckily—for you—I have not the fortune to be acquainted with her; but I will tell you her name presently. Before I do so, however, I want to make a little psychological experiment, if you will help me?"

"With pleasure, General! Provided I am rewarded by your handing me over to somebody who can present me, before we leave the house."

"Understood. Besides, Lady Overcrowe may oblige you,—provided she knows her guest. Quite likely she doesn't!... Listen carefully. You pass for a remarkable reader at sight of characters, of social personalities and so on. Look attentively at the lady. You can look at her so the more easily because she seems perfectly absorbed in what Samuelsson is saying. Outline to me in a few sentences what sort you take her to be, psychologically. What kind of a nature—what species of feminine temperament—what attitude toward daily life. Then I shall know conclusively how far you are the social oracle in character-guessing that I've heard you described. Come now! Lieutenant von N— and I are all ears. One—two—three! Give us your snapshot of the Artemis-lady in violet and a hundred thousand francs worth of emeralds."

"*Elöre* ["go ahead"]—I said Imre von N—encouragingly, in his Magyar." It's the chance of your life, Esstay."

I hesitated. Then, after once more studying in respectful admiration that symmetrical loveliness—the pure, firm modulations of the face, the plastic elegance of the supple form, I answered the re-

quest. I was quite young, remember:

"A woman outwardly like her—well, she should have—must have—a nature to correspond. All with her is the love of harmony. The symmetrical in existence, the aversion of whatever is unrestful, unfeminine, ugly! She is in vigorous health; likely is fond of active sports, but never to excess. I should say that she were of rank—hereditarily so. As to nationality, well—from Lombardy—Venice—or possibly some South Austrian province. She is extremely aesthetic, but perhaps not what you call enthusiastically aesthetic. Her artistic emotions are rather in reserve, kept below the surface, so to say. She loves letters, arts, music, with a genuine sentiment, but tacitly. Intellectual? No, not very. That is, she is not distinctively intellectual. But she is highly impressionable to what intellect can produce, even when she cannot understand its workings—does not trouble herself to do so. If she be married, she is a happy mother... With that face—the face of a classic Madonna of the Rinascimento, she must have beautiful children, and they have a mother who loves them as they should love such a mother. There is something latently Madonna-like—"madonnesca" as our Italian friends call it—about her. She—"

Just here General Labride began laughing, quietly, ah, quietly! But in such concentrated amusement! He laughed so disconcertingly, and Imre von N—, who had no clear notion of why General Labride should be enlivened by my summary, joined in the cachinnation with such zest, because of the old gentleman's contagious mirth, that I did not know whether to be piqued or amused. The end of which

was that I too began to laugh, until I reminded myself of my reputation and hope.

"I am to be presented to her, General? Somehow or other."

Labride became serious. He looked at Lieutenant Imre and at me. Again that unpleasing shadow darkened his strong, sincere eyes. Then he said slowly ironically:

"Young man, I revere your gift! I will urge Lady Overcrowe to present you to the fair subject of your very perceptive, very valuable, very interesting diagnosis! But on two conditions! You have not fully fulfilled the preliminary one—as I will prove. Hence the new ones. The first condition is—can you swim? Swim well? Save yourself in any ordinary aquatic emergency? Perhaps defend yourself in the water at the same time—a bit?"

Fortunately we three were rather in a corner, by the balustrade, and nobody marked our colloquy. I laughed loud enough now.

"General Labride, is the lady a mermaid? Or perhaps a rival of Captain Webb? Yes, I swim—with facility. Is it her fish-tail, or other important—de—tail that I have entirely overlooked?"

The voice of General Labride was of a colder shade of aversion than his countenance, usually so kindly:

"Don't pun. Your powers of personality-reading, for once, have failed! But be consoled! That serene-faced female being over there has deceived the eyes and imaginations, not to say the hearts, of men who have observed her far oftener than you are likely to do. That is to say even if you desire, after I have

told you something of her history—one short chapter of it only—to cultivate her acquaintance. I have more than once thought of her as the best example I know of how Nature can amuse herself at our expense, warning us against trusting ourselves to conventionalities—to what we believe Nature's outer logic... But—see—I am too late to serve you! You have lost your chance for to-day. Our Diana-Madonna is taking leave of Lady Overcrowe, and she will be out of the room and in her carriage before you could offer your respectful homages. In any event, I could not very well tell you here the little tale that I have in mind. This is no place for biographies. Will you and Lieutenant von N— be at the Cerchio Internazionale, sometime toward the end of this evening? Eleven o'clock? Good—I will meet you in the second smoking-room. Nobody comes there so late—we shall be quite by ourselves."

Pushing his chair forward, and lighting his cigar, General Labride began, as we sat together that evening in the smoking-room. Inre von N— and I were certainly rivals in curiosity.

"The lady in the mauve toilette, with those seven or eight splendid emeralds, that you have so admired this afternoon, is no Italian, as you might fancy her or not—even in as international a Roman drawing-room as that of Lady Overcrowe. She is not an Italian, not European at all—by direct origin. She is by no means of an aristocratic descent. Not more is she at all of the education, temperament or tastes which you were pleased to

bestow on her this afternoon. She is an American; a German-American that is to say. I have forgotten her commonplace family-name—a Swabian name I think—at any rate, it has no importance. But her given-name I know—Johanna Ludmila. She is a grand-daughter of a rich brewer, off in one of those great North-Western cities in the United States."

"Neither of her parents were alive, even when she was a child. Her grandfather sent her to Paris to be educated in a convent. There she was given what education she possesses—which is little enough. For, the devout sisters, in fact, found they could teach Mademoiselle Johanna nothing—nothing. Books she has always hated. For fine arts she has not, never has had, the least sensibility. Her coming to a musicale is a joke! Whatever intelligence she manages to suggest as to aesthetics, letters, is the purest affectation—the superficiality of her snobism."

"So much as to her mind. As to her soul—well, she is not an immoral woman, but an amoral woman. She affects devotion—at convenience. But if she has any veritable religious emotions—h'm, I would much like to know what sort they are! After what I have just said, you will not be surprised to be told that about the last kind of psychological luggage that she possesses is anything tender, particularly domestic psychology! The Lord—or the Devil—left such matters out of the recipe for her make-up! Maternal—she! Oh, oh! For all that, she married, married well, as goes the quality of the man whose name she yet bears. For, she is still the wife of the sometime famous sportsman, the Conte Damaso della Sturra. Della Sturra is half-English. He was a schoolmate of

mine. He spoke English perfectly—almost more spontaneously than Italian. He was educated wholly in England, and has had large interests there. He is, or was, a man of kind enough heart; but he surely had a rough temper, and by no means was always a gentleman in manners and words. Life and sporting-society had roughened and coarsened him—deplorably—I know. The couple have not lived together these six or seven years. But they are not divorced, and there has never been a breath of matrimonial scandal attaching to the Countess Johanna, much less a word of marital reproach to her husband. Nevertheless Della Sturra hates her, as he hates no other living being, as he has never hated another! He refuses to live with her, to hear her name spoken, to meet her, to salute her. She does not care an iota for that, except as to whatever social prestige is lost by it, in Genoa and Milan and so on; for she never loved her husband, and her wealth makes her independent of him or of anybody else. Did Della Sturra ever love her? Perhaps—in the very beginning—sentiment of sex and possession. I can't guess—the marriage was "arranged."

"She never has had but two passions, this woman whose type of beauty—suave, symmetrical, classic—is so amazingly misplaced—her face almost ludicrously deceptive as to the psychic Countess Johanna. Her first and supreme passion was, and doubtless is, her "love of life for herself." Of *her* life as sphere of her beauty, her vanity. You say of course that most women, included the less picturesque, have that cult inborn, even to the degree that makes them horrified at the thought of

death because death means loss of beauty. They are indifferent to everything else, they are capable of committing baseness, crime, in instinctive homage to their all-eclipsing physical egotism. That is true—if yet few vain women, even immoderately vain, will commit, for a like reason, the same sort of crime that was once on a time that of Countess Johanna."

"Her second passion? It plays into the first. It is her enthusiasm for certain sports which suit her artistically; sports to keep her beautiful body in statuesque strength and grace; sports to show her off to advantage before a crowd—of course a *chic* "crowd."

"This last particular trait began to concentrate itself on her fine swimming, a few years ago. It led her to become as capable a woman-swimmer as one can wish to watch. She became a sort of notable at various French and Belgian resorts—"the swimming Countess"—"the Venus Anadyomene of Ostend"—"la Sirène de Trouville"—and so on. By the by, I understand that she seldom or never swims now; but her fame, I assure you, endures. Under all that graceful anatomy, as she glides about a drawing-room, is strength that many a "professional" well might envy. Countess Johanna most liked to exercise it where it drew scores, hundreds, to look at her sporting in the sea—so easily, securely, audaciously—in such plastic poses!"

"And so to a question from you. You asked me this afternoon if she were a mermaid. No—she is not a mermaid, except as a perfect swimmer; and because as another likeness, a mermaid also is—a monster. For Countess Johanna is a monster! Yes, monster

worse than a brute! A creature "less human" (as we say of ourselves so flatteringly!) than seems many a beast! Not even beasts in their right beast-senses will do what once that splendid animal once did—an act which cost her her husband, her home, the human sympathies of hundreds who know the story, the social interest of whole circles of friends that she possessed on her own account, and surely all whom she acquired by her marriage to Damaso Della Sturra! She is much less often in smart society to-day than she was seen, for a time, or than she would like to be seen now—I know that. Many cold shoulders are turned to those lovely sloping ones—especially shoulders of her own sex. She lives a life of rather casual *mondanité* nowadays. I doubt if she had been at—even—Lady Overcrowe's *omnium gatherum* to-day, had she not been the guest in Rome of another lady asked to the function."

"One child was born to Contessa Johanna. Probably she did her best to avoid that inconvenience, as more successfully she dismissed later any such menace to beauty. The boy was the most exquisitely lovely little fellow I have ever set eyes on. His father adored him, not only as the last of his line, in whom centered all interests as heir, but because of the child's beauty and sweetness of temperament. At first, as you can suppose, the mother neglected the boy to perfection. But, lo, when he was about six years old, Countess Johanna discovered that her small son could be an admirable adjunct, physically and sentimentally, to her own spectacular attractiveness! From that evil moment, Contessa Johanna made a point of being everywhere

with the boy. Everywhere that he could be effectively brought "into picture," so to say, with his mother."

"Therewith that little fellow began a new child-life! He was always in the mother's carriage, for her afternoon-drive. She went to children's fêtes solely to be remarked with him by other and less attractive mothers—better to say, by their husbands and sons. She was photographed with the boy, in innumerable poses. She was painted as "Venus with Cupid," as "Latona and Apollo"—by two or three fashionable artists—Bouguereau, Diaz, Moore, Leighton. She taught (I am certain of it) the boy to take odd little poses that caught the eye irresistibly and admiringly. And so on! If Lello had been a doll instead of a living child, he could not have been more a machine in the hands of the woman that was his mother—shrewd, vain, cold, without heart for her boy; with only eyes for him, as an invaluable new ornament to herself!"

"In July, 19—Countess Johanna and her husband (the order of precedence is quite suitable from their social aspects) came to the Hotel des Rochers Noirs, at Trouville, for the season."

"About a week after they arrived, Count Damaso was obliged to return to Italy, because of a death in his family. His wife was left to her own devices, and to those of her clique, for a fortnight."

"One morning, while the lady was disporting herself masterfully in the waves, with two or three male partners, to the admiration of a more or less obvious Trouville audience of all sorts, her boy was brought by his nurse to the beach, for his bath. His mother took him with her into the water. So was

perfected a new and flattering *tableau-vivant*! Nothing could have exceeded the grace and intimacy of such an episode. It was as if a nereid with her child were sporting in the waves. The water was calm, the boy had no fear. He laughed as he sat on his mother's shoulders. The sun flooded them both with its effulgence, as the lovely Contessa Johanna swam about with her lovely little son."

"From that morning, she arranged for having the boy take his bath with her. A new sensation in her smart set—or calling itself so—at Trouville was this exhibition of—shall I say—maternal natation? The illustrated journals published several portraits of the pair. She used to take the child out on a life-buoy, and using it as an islet, she prolonged the show—in which opera-glasses and lorgnettes were levelled freely."

"Her husband knew absolutely nothing of her new freak, it seems, till he came back from Italy. Della Sturra was horrified, furious, when he found what had been going on with the boy. He was angry, first, because of the publicity of such proceedings; second, because of the lurking danger of a fatality to his sole offspring. A violent scene or so must have ensued. In any case, Conte Damaso forbade his wife to take the boy with her into the sea "under any circumstances, in any weather, at any hour." In consequence of this *ukase*, Countess Johanna made herself as disagreeable to her husband as—even she knew how to be. But she found him violently intractable.... "I forbid it! Understand plainly, once for all—I forbid it!... You are never to take Lello into the sea! Never! Even

God may not tolerate your cursed vanity enough to avert a tragedy, to which it seems to me only the Devil can tempt you!"

"Toward the end of August, among the guests at the Rochers was Csillag, the—well, notorious Hungarian painter of nudes—fat young Samuelssohn's teacher. Csillag was enormously taken with Countess Johanna's possibilities as a model. He raved crazily about her—openly to Countess Johanna herself, and to every body else. He painted a big study of her as Atalanta, and another one as Britomart, or Bradamante, or such like. Presently Csillag made her promise to allow him to paint her as "Thetis Sporting in the Sea, with the Infant Achilles."

"The precise week that this picture was to be begun, Damaso Della Sturra was ill. He could not leave the hotel during some days. Either by coincidence or design, just then it was that Csillag asked Countess Johanna to allow him to take some photographs of her while amusing herself in the water. Csillag said that they would be useful in painting his "Thetis and Achilles"—which picture he could not possibly more than begin while at Trouville. Csillag must go back to Budapest in a few days—so he said. But all the same—well, I have heard tales about Csillag's collection of photographs of "society"—and other—women."

"Countess Johanna consented to the photographing—with great alacrity. She was used to all that sort of thing. So the following morning was fixed for the bath—and the photographs. Countess Johanna did not see any necessity for mentioning to her husband this rendezvous.—at once aquatic and

artistic. So Della Sturra knew nothing of it, nor of exactly what sort of photographs she had agreed to "compose"—nor of Lello's inclusion."

"As it happened, I had arrived in Trouville that identical morning. I did not know that Della Sturra and his family were in the place. It was a bright, windy day, the water was almost violently rough. Few bathers entered it—only the obstinate or inexperienced. I was strolling towards noon, along a rather removed stretch of the beach, when I noticed a group at a distance, watching somebody bathing—or rather somebody swimming. I had a strong binocular with me; I put it to casual use. I discerned a gentleman with a camera, that seemed in some way connected specially with the activities ahead. I went on—I began to hear laughing—lively exclamations, as if for the benefit of the person so courageously alert in the waves—loud applause and talk—all from thirty, or perhaps forty, onlookers, most of whom seemed to know well the object of their admiration. Presently I discovered that the swimmer was a woman, either of the demi-monde or of the beau-monde, judging from the conduct and elegance of her spectators. And—just as I was drawing near enough to be more curious, I saw also a nurse leading quickly a little boy down to the centre of observation. The child was sturdy, apparently of about seven years. He was dressed in a scanty—very scanty—bathing-costume, as if to be given a dip in that rough August morning's surf!"

"I remember perfectly well that I said to myself—'Is it possible that the *bonne* there has so

little common sense as to allow such a youngster in the surf, on such a stiff morning!"

"I came up to the edge of the circle. It included various other idle strangers. Out from the water, like an energetic statue ready to become repose itself again, after such a vigorous exhibition, came Countess Johanna. I recognised her at once—she is too statuesque to be confounded with any other woman even when (or especially when) about half-dressed—as on that morning."

"What next passed, I saw and I heard—though as a quite unrecognised observer, for I kept well into the background."

"'Are you quite ready, Monsieur Csillag?' asked Countess Johanna with suave eagerness. 'Come along, Lello! In we go!'"

"The little fellow had been staring at his mother, at first in apprehension—then in vague terror. Children and animals have subtle intuitions of their peril. Countess Johanna caught at the little boy's hand. He drew away, pale with alarm. She clouded over at once."

"'Are you a silly little girl, or a little man, Lello? Shame on you!... I am ashamed of you! Men do not feel afraid of anything. Only nasty little girls are ever afraid! Besides, you are keeping Monsieur Csillag waiting! Be quick!... Monsieur Csillag has his camera all ready to make a beautiful photograph of us, out in the water there. And he is going to paint a picture of us so!... What! You are going to cry? A little boy-man who cries! A boy who cries like a silly little girl, because he is afraid!'"

"Lello held up his head. He choked back his tears. He held out his little hand to his mother. 'I am not... a—a little girl.—I am not—afraid—of the... the water!' "—he said."

"His mother picked him up, much as she might have done a piece of theatrical property. 'You are ready, Monsieur Csillag?'"

"'Brava, brava, dear madame! Quite ready. I have six films in this camera, and six more in that one yonder,' replied the painter. Therewith a general burst of applause!"

"In a few minutes, we saw Countess Johanna breasting the waves. She was holding Lello on her shoulders, despite that unquiet sea; and she assumed successively a dozen swiftly plastic poses—floating—swimming—gyrating like a seal. It was done with the athletic art which conceals art, a practicability in her case because of her supple muscularity as a perfect swimmer. But obviously she swam with effort in such a sea; and once we heard her call out 'C'est bien fatigant, Monsieur Csillag! Je ne veux pas rester longtemps—faites—vite!'"

"And the boy? What of him? With my glass—several other persons were similarly equipped and watchful—I looked even more at him than at his mother. Lello was pale. His eyes were full of a dread of the high movement of the waves on all sides. But he uttered no cry, only clung closer. One of the cameras of Csillag was busy."

"Suddenly we saw a great curving surface of water sweep between us and the Countess Johanna. Whether it was a matter of wind or of current or of both, I could not tell. It was like one of those

irresistible '*sèches*' that mount so swiftly the nearer lengths of the Seine, from its outer volume as an estuary. The surf showed an undercurrent equally sudden. Some minutes passed. We all looked for the Countess in some anxiety. Glasses were passed nervously. The anxiety was quickened when, after much careful searching of eyes, with difficulty we caught sight of the mother and son. The two had been carried far outside of the limit usual for skilled swimmers. Worse than that, they were being forced farther out, each instant, by their subtle enemy!"

"There rose a general exchange of suppressed exclamations from all our group. Glances were exchanged, no matter how far we were strangers to one another. All the peril was obvious! A half-moment and it was heightened. For we saw Countess Johanna with one free arm make a vehement signal of appeal! She called out—something—again. Even that single, quick gesture and cry seemed to have cost her something of her power of resistance. She did not repeat the effort."

"'They are drowning!... They are drowning!... A boat! A boat!... Where is it?... Where is it?'"

There was not a single employé of the local "*sauvetage*" at hand—or visible! There was to be seen a boat, some yards off high and dry. But it seemed to be a fishing-boat quite out of use. However, a dozen of us rushed to it. Some women began to scream—one of them fainted; but nobody looked at her."

"We men caught hold of the old boat—pulled it along. Yes—there were at least oars in it. Also one life-belt—one—from which several corks had been

abstracted or broken away ! "

" Did we lift bodily, or pull, or push that boat toward the water ? I do not know. It seemed so heavy, so cruelly inert ! "

" Boat and we were within a few yards of the surf, when came running, stumbling to us, through the crowd, a man. He was dishevelled, livid, calling out inarticulate words. He had come rushing seaward from the highway, to that scene of sudden terror. Behind him were also running two other men, calling as if to expostulate or to intercept. One I remember was in the clothing of a *garde-malade*, the other was dressed as a valet, but was coatless, hatless, collarless. The running man leaped to the boat. He was in it as soon as we were. It was Della Surra."

" He was cursing like a madman. ' D—n her ! ' I heard him exclaim—with far fiercer curses—half-a-dozen times, quite aloud, yet always as if to himself, in a swift and an awful malediction... He had no eyes for anything, for anybody, save that sea ahead, and the swimming Countess Johanna and little Lello Della Surra."

" It was a business of minutes—all this scene. But those minutes were frightfully long till we had that solid, clumsy fishing-boat in water deep enough to float it—were urging it at last straight toward the Countess Johanna and her child—her only child—Della Surra's only child."

" We pulled like lashed gally-slaves. We came to within some yards of the two. No—we had not made any mistake ! Exhaustion—despair—sudden death, were written on those half-submerged faces. One caught the dread on the countenance even of the

little boy, though Lello probably was less aware of the imminence of fatality. His mother's great eyes were like those of a Medusa—I marked their staring horror. She called to us a word or so—in her strangling agony, her final effort! Then the boy screamed... The matter was to be only of seconds, as to loss or rescue."

"We threw the corks. They fell within the reach of the mother. But it was Lello, half-falling from the swimmer's support, clinging to her neck with one arm, who first fairly seized that old life-jacket. He clutched it, he raised his small, light body upon it. An instant—and his mother, in her turn, grasped it. But it was not sufficient for their combined weight. They sank. A wave passed over them. They rose up out of it. Both now were only a few yards away from us, despite a fierce cross-current that grudged us each last hand-breadth of approach that we could wrest—those last six yards, so direfully wide! And then we discerned a kind of struggle begun—the life-jacket in the clutch of four hands—two so small yet vigorous!"

"Therewith came from us an exclamation of a kind that I could hardly describe to you; an outcry of a handful of men as protesting spectators of an action at once frightful and shameful, something of which we seven were witnesses in common. For—we saw Countess Johanna strike away the despairing grasp of her little son at the life-jacket! We saw her push, no,—throw Lello farther out into the water—fighting him away from the jacket, dashing his young fingers from it, tearing the child's hands from her arms and shoulders. Worse—for we saw her strike

the boy !... He floated an instant more—he seemed able to catch at the corks. Then we saw her strike at him again—this time with her feet. Once—twice...!"

"One does not need to know what emotions were uppermost in such a woman's brain, in such an episode. They must have been something thus :
'I to die!... I to drown here!... I to perish, in the splendour of my triumphant beauty!... I to go down into this vile, disfiguring, watery abyss! I to roll and swirl, lower and and lower, a hideous dead derelict, down into the oblivion that has set its black-green trap for me! I—I—I—I... That for *me*! Never! never!'"

"Her ruling instinct, her only one, Self—surely was supreme in that wrestle with Death!—in that fight against her child. Here was none of the maternal instinct that has been the only one for a thousand other women perishing in flood or fire, with their children in their arms. Wait—I know what you would say. The Countess Johanna, believe me, does not deserve the excuse you would urge—that the woman was in such a state of fear, of moral collapse, that any one's own Ego is the only extant detail of creation in all the universe! No! Countess Johanna, even in that climax was still able, physically and mentally, to be herself and—to be deliberate. She chose lucidly, then and there, between her own life and her little child's life. Her choice was made in a terrible but convinced sense of what was arbitrarily worth while in the world!.. Most worth while in the world to *her*!"

"Lello disappeared. Some days later the boy's body was found near Houlgate."

"In another moment—as I think—we were able to draw Countess Johanna, still clutching the life-belt, into our boat. But while some of us were giving the nearly exhausted woman the first cares, as she lay there in our midst, wholly conscious, regaining her respiration swiftly—I remember being impressed, even in my own state of reaction, by the marvellous rapidity with which her face reassumed its calm—that "enchanting" repose of expression."

"We pulled to the beach. A dozen men were already half in the water, regardless of ruining their habiliments. Many pairs of arms were extended to help us to land ourselves and our burden. The laggard officials were hurrying up to the scene. A great crowd of excited newcomers from all sides had collected around the knot that we had left."

"All the time of our return-course, Damaso Della Sturra sat crouched, immovable in the boat. His face was between his hands. Still—he was looking out over the waters in which little Lello had been engulfed. Only fugitively he glanced at his wife—safe and alive. He was thinking, one may be sure, of his son—dead by the supreme egotism of his mother! For that it was so, not otherwise, no man or woman should doubt who could have seen what we had seen in that desperate conjuncture so quickly occurring and so homicidally ended!"

"We laid Countess Johanna on a pile of wraps spread for her. She opened her eyes again. She looked up into the face of Csillag, who stood there with one of his cameras still under his arm. She smiled on him—that half-smile of Leonardo da Vinci's "Madonna delle Rocche." Then came from

her beautiful pallid lips:

" 'Monsieur Csillag—je suis encore—vraiment—dans la vie—vraiment dans la vie! Vous voyez! Vos belles photographies—?' "

"Csillag began some phrase. But Della Sturra stepped between his prostrate wife and the painter. Damaso was almost as pale as the Countess Johanna. Della Sturra leaned a little over her. Then he spoke in carefully measured distinctness, in an hateful loudness, calculated to make every word audible to all the nearer circles."

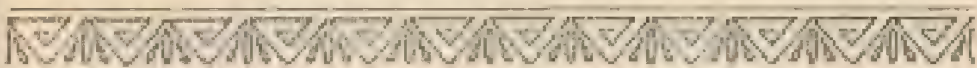
" 'Yes, madame! You are alive. But my boy—whom you have drowned—he is dead! Monster that you are!...' Again came that frightful English curse! ... 'God in heaven has not damned you yet! But I hope he will not forget to damn you soon! And as surely as God will do that, just so surely will I never speak to you or look at you again! Take *that* for my witness—and for your precious life! Murderess! Child-murderess!' "

"Della Sturra leaned. Slowly, carefully, he spat into his wife's upturned face. Then he walked away, tottering between his two attendants. They disappeared in the roadway. I have never seen him since; but so far as I know Della Sturra has kept his word. He lives in Malta—a taciturn recluse."

"That there was any particular secrecy among those of us who know best to just what detail of that shocking affair the words of Della Sturra referred, I will not say. Explanations were asked—then and later. There was certainly no sentiment in our minds that suggested concealing the truth. Truth surely; for, not one of us who had seen what we

had seen had the least variation of impression. That mother willfully was the authour of her own child's death! I can add that she has never seemed really afflicted... Oh, don't talk about "the overthrow of higher emotions,"—"excusable loss of maternal instincts in acute personal peril!" I repeat it—Countess Johanna in that danger had strength of body and deliberateness of perversity in every impulse and action."

"The story spread slowly. Poor little Lello has been amply avenged by it. And now you see, young man," concluded General Labride, "why when you desired to meet Countess Johanna, I particularly asked you if you could swim. My counsel to you is not to make that lady's acquaintance, even as a sort of terrible human curio!—either in water or in a drawing-room. Countess Johanna does not possess what most men expect that women, beautiful or ugly, should possess—a heart. You know well enough the dark Provincial history of our great French Revolution to remember what were the ineffable cruelties perpetrated in the name of justice, at Nantes in 1793-94. If—in the infernal Shades—punishments and their executioners are fitted to crimes, as the playwright Gilbert says, I hope that down there, Countess Johanna will make the acquaintance of Carrier; and that each day she will find reserved for her, by Carrier's cruel hands, and repeated for her in Cocytus or Phlegethon, the death that on that summer morning she was so horribly resolute to postpone!



(TO MRS. MADELEINE R. BAKER).

THE PAGODA: A SECTARIAN INSINUATION.

Upon any afternoon, there may be seen not far from the entrance to the quarters for carnivora, in a certain large Zoological Garden which I frequent, a notably royal-looking Bengal tiger. As a general thing, he reposes comfortably upon a sleek flank—blinking his topaz eyes, occasionally twitching his superb tail. He gapes frequently. It is to be feared that he basks in unutterable thoughts about humanity which strolls up so idly to his penitentiary, stares and passes. But he says nothing on that topic.

He is not merely a travelled immigrant of his genus. He is an old exile favored with many odd experiences. If were not for meditations upon these, time would hang very heavily upon his paws. Time is unluckily something that a caged tiger finds as much difficulty in killing as does the most *blasé* clubman. Less wonder then that upon a certain summer-evening the great beast amiably spent an hour in imparting to a biped admirer (whom the family-cat, in colloquies of confidence, had instructed in feline dialects) the following somewhat theological narrative—being the veritable statement of why the

worthy people of Foo-Tchee, in South Western China, built their famous Crackle-Ware Pagoda. It is possible that the reader has never heard of it.

"It was in that same spring of which I spoke, Sahib," pursued the great cat dreamily, "that Lady Hundred-Stripes, my beautiful consort (ah!—where is she this afternoon, I wonder?) complained of malaria. 'My dear,' said I to her promptly, 'we will cross the mountains. We will summer in China! The climate is bracing. The society of our relatives, the Leopards, will be agreeable. The lower classes are partial to sleeping on simple mats, out of doors.'"

This last argument carried the question with Lady Hundred-Stripes. By the end of the month we had reached our journey's end, and were installed in a most capital nook—the long grass of the jungle about a mile back from the south wall of the great Temple of Foo-Tchee. In the great Temple of Foo-Tchee dwelt five-and-thirty zealous priests. At the head of this muster of super-excellence presided gloriously the famed Quong-Wawk. If you have not known of him, Sahib, you have been ignorant, verily."

"For never could there have lived a more wonderful man. Such learning! Such absolute certainty of knowing and of teaching the Only, the Supreme, the Indispensable Path to Heaven! Such eloquence! Such a pig-tail! Such a solemn strut when he took his walks abroad! Incidentally, also such a—flavor; as Lady Hundred-Stripes ejaculated to me a few months afterward, when she and I discus-

sed together his virtues and his —joints. Quong-Wawk and his two sub-priors, Moon-Shine and Kow-Hi, with the rest of the five-and-thirty brethren—each one of whom was better than the other—taught the populace, and preached, and dusted the great bronze gods; in a word, they were the pride of all decent citizens of sound spiritual convictions, for leagues around Foo-Tchee. So zealous were they, such fine speakers, and more than anything else, such splendid collectors of tithes, usual or special, that in long, long years there had hardly been a devout and solvent worshipper in the neighborhood."

"Picture to yourself therefore, I beg, the consternation of the estimable Quong-Wawk, to say nothing of dismay among his five-and thirty coadjutors, when one fated noon Moon-Shine and Kow-Hi rushed into their chief's presence, regardless of precedent; and after many bowings to the floor, broke the startling news that fourteen especially learned Hindus were on their way from India, designing to convert all the Foo-Tchee people from the religion of their environment to rank Brahminism! Unluckily a recent edict of religious tolerance would make impossible any plan of preventing by force that impertinent sectarian insinuation! Come it must!

" 'Oh, abominable!' shrieked Kow-Hi.' "

" 'Oh, outrageous!' burst forth Moon-Shine.

" 'Will not all our precious labours be undone? Will not these silly inhabitants of Foo-Tchee forget the Truth—sink to perdition. Forget our long and beautifully-worded sermons?' "

" 'Our tithes will be filched from under our very fingers?' wailed Kow-Hi disconsolately. 'Our feasts

will be neglected—worse still our collection-trays!"

"'We shall expound unto empty benches!' interrupted Moon-Shine shutting his eyes and shaking his head to fro until his pig-tail flew about like a whip-lash. 'Souls will be perverted and lost—as well as our opportunity for buying that piece of orchard-land so cheaply! For do not these addle-brained people ever listen to the last new thing?'"

"All this time the great Quong-Wawk, of a more complete philosophy had uttered not any word, contenting himself with one double sneeze of phenomenal power. For whenever too strongly disturbed in spirit he was accustomed to cast himself upon that excellent suggestion which may be read by all in the Golden Book of Green Wisdom—to count the buttons upon one's outer garments until one is struck by a thought truly useful and calm. There stood Quong-Wawk with his eyes rolled up to the roof; silent—but with the buttons upon his petticoat flying between his fingers like a string of beads... 'Sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three—' he was saying. 'Whence received you this intelligence? Sixty-four, sixty-five, sixty-six—I do not believe it!'"

"'Ah! But be pleased to read this letter!' responded Moon-Shine, unrolling a long yellow scroll."

"'And this!' sobbed Kow-Hi, extending, with averted head, a still closer-written crimson sheet."

"'Quong Wawk read. His eyes expanded, as does the bud of the Hidden-Felicity Tree. Putting the two letters into their cases, he raised his eyes to the company who hung breathless upon his lips, and said with dignity, 'This intelligence appears to be sad fact! Let us enter the Blue Council Chamber!—Sixty-

seven, sixty-eight, sixty-nine!' And counting vigorously his buttons, Quong-Wawk headed from the room his tapering succession of priests, who followed their leader in single file, like the bobs on a kite's tail."

"I should have told you, Sahib, that it is to Lady Hundred-Stripes that I am indebted for the account of the above scene. Gracefully stretched upon the very roof of the apartment in which Quong-Wawk had addressed his fellowship, Lady Hundred-Stripes had been anxious for them. As for the fourteen particularly learned Hindus who were expected—'Ugh!' growled my dear consort,—'when I think of them, I—well, I really feel as if I should just like to eat them up.'"

"'Do you indeed?' replied I reflectively. 'My love, if you can keep yourself in *that* humor, the creed of our friends may yet triumph. Let us wait. Let us see in just what—h'm—condition these Hindu emissaries may be—eh?' My beautiful partner looked at me intelligently and smiled. What dazzling teeth she had!"

"During the fortnight preceding the coming of the fourteen learned Hindus, Quong-Wawk, Moon-Shine, Kow-Hi and the whole temple-full of brethren indicated well what had been the decisions of the Blue Council-Chamber. For those alert men had organized a superb campaign against the learned Hindus. They preached far and near—until in fact they were quite ready to drop. They had innumerable "personal interviews" with every inhabitant of Foo-Tchee, warning their charges not to attend one of the meetings that the misguided strangers would surely announce. They multiplied "special services."

They bound their flock by awful promises and by threats of seventy-seven kinds of perdition, under no circumstances to give the invaders a single cash. Last but not least, in order to leave as little money as possible for the evil interlopers, they begged and invested every solitary coin they could lay hands upon."

"'Quong-Wawk is, clearly, a person of great common-sense in any religious emergency—a shepherd of heart and head,'" I observed to Lady Hundred-Stripes, on hearing of these judicious preparations for welcoming the strangers. "We shall certainly do no more than our pious duty in assisting his side of the contest.'"

"The fortnight passed. The important day dawned. True to the prophecy of Moon-Shine, the weather-cockish Foo-Tchee townsfolk already did nothing but chatter of the fourteen particularly learned Hindus who were coming all the way from Hind, to make them good Brahmins. What were they like?—those kind enlighteners in the Truth. How old were they? How would they set about their business? So questioned the Foo-Tcheeans, until the fourteen learned men were well-nigh within their gates. But as to Quong-Wawk, he and the five-and-thirty priests of the temple, would rather have died than that any person in Foo-Tchee should fancy that they cared an ivory jackstraw for all the Brahmins in Hindustan or out of it. On the great day of arrival, they shut up tightly the big temple—down-stairs; and then, one and all, they scrambled up to the roof, to get a good look in private at the enemy. The crowd below thickened—a buzz and babble rose up to the

eager ears overhead, and finally—with strange music sounding before them, and bowing most politely to the thousands, as they walked on—actually appeared the fourteen particularly learned Hindus in solemn procession, advancing up the main street of Foo-Tchee."

"By the tail of the Great Silver Dragon!" exclaimed Moon-Shine in a breathless whisper, craning his long neck over the edge of the roof, to get a better look—"these famous men are not worth a Chinaman's notice! Behold how thin—how starved-looking they are! Learned? They? Possessed of Supreme Truth, they? And do not even turn their toes out properly in walking!"

"Seventy, seventy-one, seventy-two—" came the accents of Quong Wawk, who was staring his eyes nearly out of his head and counting furiously on his ample upper-petticoat from just the button at which he had last left off,—“these strangers are old—seventy-three, seventy-four, seventy-five—they seem not to like pig-tails—seventy-six, seventy-seven, seventy-eight—men without pig-tails are not fit to be looked at by such as are we!—seventy-nine, eighty, eighty-one—I—I scorn them—utterly!” Here the wonderful man fell back in a sort of holy faint. Moon-Shine and Kow-Hi carried him downstairs, like any common mortal."

"I must confess to my own disappointment over the strangers."

"Never mind," said Lady Hundred-Stripes consolingly—"wait but a few weeks! They will soon have become a great deat fa—". But I will betray her confidence no further."

"Her advice was excellent. For completely to

the dismay of Quong-Wawk and of all the Temple fraternity, those learned Hindoos went to their work with a vigor and success that took away one's breath! They preached. They conversed. They poked all manner of wicked fun at the Foo-Tchee Temple and at its hundred real bronze gods. They laughed merrily at Quong-Wawk, his pig-tail, his dogmas, his learning. Shameful to tell, the infatuated Foo-Tcheeans were delighted. The pious strangers made hundreds of shouting converts weekly. Most odious thing of all they contrived to collect cash at each preaching, cash by the bushel-measure—although one knows how hard it is to press juice from a squeezed lemon."

"Quong-Wawk's soul was rent with anguish—especially upon hearing of the bushel-measures of good money. To my knowledge, bronze buttons were sewed twice upon his jacket and petticoat to stand the wear and tear of those weeks. But the end came! The fourteen particularly learned Hindoos in their prosperity, had already grown careless and proud and—fat. Lady Hundred-Stripes and I remarked this fact with pleasure. Kow-Hi was finally sent to Peking with a specific account of affairs. Kow-Hi brought back letters from the Emperor; the result of which was that one beautiful night, after a crowded preaching and splendid collection, Quong-Wawk, his most athletic brethren, and all the Foo-Tchee police pounced down upon the fourteen learned Hindus. They captured them—along with two bushels of cash—tied them tightly, and threw them into an old dried-up well, just in the outskirts of Foo-Tchee, for safe keeping until next morning. As

for the cash, they went to the triumphant Quong Wawk—of course. It was a grand victory of practical theology!"

"Before this, I had seen, Sahib, that the hour for our action was coming. I had sent Supple, our eldest, into the jungle to say to a few new friends, including our cousins the Leopards, that Lady Hundred-Stripes and I 'would be happy to have their company for a little supper-party. Come late.'"

"It was perfectly dark when we—fifteen—found ourselves noiselessly disposed upon our haunches, in a circle about the mouth of the dried-up well. The bad boys of Foo-Tchee had amused themselves by throwing dead cats and dogs and such matters into the well, at the fourteen learned men, before leaving them for the night. Nevertheless the prisoners seemed trying to be more cheerful than circumstances invited—sitting in a group down at the bottom of their place of durance, and tied so tightly that they could scarcely wink."

"'What a deep discourse, dear Brother Bun-jasee,' we heard one of them saying, 'was that from your lips, this unfortunate evening, upon the Seven Sacred Tortoises!'"

"'Less fine, dear Brother Pungwuggee,' responded a drawling voice from the depths of the dark, 'than your inimitable parable of the Fish with the Golden Eyeglasses. Ah, but that was interesting! And replete with such convincing illustrations of our most sacred principles of the Only Way.'"

"'Will you not kindly—?' began another unseen interlocutor"

"'No! No! No! tell us it again I' protested (surpris-

ingly stoutly) several voices. Indeed sundry other unamiable remarks followed.—'What is for the world, and for edifying of unremunerative popular ignorance, is not for us!—'Professional work is professional work!—'Surely it is bad enough to be tied down here, without hearing our shop-talk! And so on.'

"At length, reluctantly—'True,'" replied Brother Pungwuggee, "—so—we will find other topics. For instance, astrology. Let me inquire if those can be mere stars which I suddenly see, shining so brilliantly—exactly over our heads? In the parable of the Fish with the Golden Eyeglasses—"

"The bit of the parable of the Fish with the Golden Eyeglasses was never told! Those stars were nothing less than Lady Hundred-Stripes's eyes peering downward. At the same time, she gave the royal leap. We all followed her—straight down... Our entertainment was spoken of as a complete success."

"Some hours later, morning broke. Quong-Wawk, Moon-Shine, Kow-Hi and all the brethren came in stately array with the Foo-Tchee police and the rabble, to extract the prisoners from the dried-up well, that they might be cleansed, tried, admonished and banished. And now here comes, Sahib, the most wonderful part of my story. Surely you will not decline to believe it, if you believe the lying tales of the hunters' books concerning their killing three tigers in a forenoon and an elephant or so after tiffin! (For matter of truth, we usually eat them before they can take aim.) As I was saying, the company reached the dried-up well. It was empty! Empty!... No relics—not one bone, not one shred of cotton cloth, not so much as a hair or a finger-nail of any

of the fourteen learned Hindus could with the utmost search be discovered! The cats, dogs, stones—yes, such evidences were there in abundance. But nothing more! I, and my family and my friends, we all do our work with neatness, as well as dispatch."

"Among the visitors, great was the confusion. Some said one thing, some another. 'The prisoners had been liberated'—'they had fled,'—'thieves had carried them off for slaves'—and the like. But Quong-Wawk, seeing that there was not the faintest trace of the manner wherein the fourteen learned Hindus had been disposed of, was not content with any useless, commonplace explanation of the mystery. All called upon him for his opinion. It must therefore be new and bold and—practical."

"So—mounting upon Kow-Hi's ample back and keeping tight hold of the famous petticoat with the right hand—he pointed to the well with the left thumb—shut his eyes—smiled—opened his orbs and said, 'Oh, beloved brethren! Oh, good people of Foo-Tchee! I am not moved at this discovery! I am not astonished! For lo! I have known, yea, ever since their coming hither, that these strangers whom ye took to be fourteen learned Hindus were not Hindus, but fourteen precious spirits whom I besought the gods to send upon earth, for making trial of your faith in the Only True Religion! Did I not play my part well, oh ye fickle, unsound people? Oh, dogs, oh reprobates! Oh, men devoid of conviction!... Do ye repent? Build then at once a porcelain pagoda over this well's mouth, whence your heart-searchers have ascended to heaven. Let that pagoda be called the Pagoda of the Changeable Ones! And

let it stand forever as a memorial of the supreme and sole Path to Perfection, to the Only Way—a witness of your shame and penitence!... Eighty-two, eighty-two, eighty-three, eighty-four!"

"Is it surprising that all Foo-Tchee fell down in awe and rapture and contrition, at the feet of Quong-Wawk and the brethren of the Temple? And in due time, Sahib, the great Crackle-Ware Pagoda arose. There indeed stands it, tinkling and glistening to-day."

The four-footed tale-teller ceased abruptly. He yawned so frankly that I thought proper to make my adieux without delay. He has not spoken to me since.



(TO MRS. RUSSELL SAGE)

MISS MATCHLOCK'S LUCK-PENNY.

Miss Matchlock gathered together her parcels distributed on the counter of Deacon Shem Bett's "store." The afternoon-sun was falling, rather with brightness than warmth, in and about the village, from between the two forest-covered mountains behind it. Yellow streaks penetrated the shop through large rectangular windows with twelve-by-ten panes; touched the shelves of wares, gilded the low cornice. Ephraim Scott, the Deacon's clerk-of-all-work was lending the customer a divided assistance, by pushing the nearer packages forward with one hand, while with the other upheld to his large white teeth, he bit off a twine-length. The Deacon was occupied with ledgers at the tall old desk, by a back-window. Presently Deacon Shem became aware that Ephraim Scott and Miss Matchlock were arguing. He turned his head in vague curiosity.

Between Ephraim Scott's thumb and forefinger was held an ancient copper cent. Ephraim was pressing the cent on Miss Matchlock. The tall lady denied ownership. Her small change had balanced.

She could not remember having had such a thing as an old-fashioned copper cent in her pocket in more than a little while. The cent suddenly had rolled upon the scene, between Ephraim and herself, during their chat over the counter. Miss Matchlock affirmed that Ephraim had "joggled" one of the cheese-boxes, behind which the waif had been sheltered—perhaps for a many day. Ephraim insisted that it must have been among coins in Miss Matchlock's purse, just deposited in her deep pocket. Here were two mortals not anxious to possess more than their due—even with one of them acting for an employer.

"No—I tell you it's not mine!" protested Miss Matchlock. "I've not had this purse open (except now) since yesterday forenoon, when I paid Miss Sellick her bill for my two bedquilts. 'Twasn't in what *she* gave me."

Ephraim turned the cent in his palm, smiling. "Suppose I toss up for it, Miss Malvina?"

"No gamblin' where I am Ephraim," she said with cheerful sharpness. "You forget I was your Sunday-School teacher last year. Why, I don't know but what I'd as leave have young men learn to play tipplin', as to begin playin' gamblin'. Keep that cent, my boy. You can't say I'm never a free-handed party, Deacon!" she called out in her pleasant, sonorous voice.

"I'm not goin' to be beat by you in that—nor in showin' a tender conscience, Malvina," returned the Deacon's dulcet tones from his adytum. He quit the desk and came forward between swinging hams, "sides," scuttles and woodenware, depending from

the beams. "A copper cent aint a fortune for either one of us. May it fetch you luck! Take it as a luck-penny from me, if for no better reason. Come!"

Miss Matchlock smiled a trifle contemptuously, though she put forth her hand to the copper. "Well—I suppose I may as well—and thank you Deacon!—rather than stand in this hot place till somebody comes in and asks if we know what's become of one, whole, large, complete copper cent, lost out of their granpa's patrimony! Hope' twasn't a child's penny—poor little soul! If anybody asks, you know where to send. Only I don't believe in luck, Shem. Luck's the Lord! That's what luck is. I don't expect there's ever any other kind of luck that counts."

Miss Matchlock turned away, smiling austere. "Besides, Ephraim—or you—you'll get back this present of yours by the week's end, for something or other I'll have run out of, at the house. If you don't, I'll give it to little Kitty Bunce next Sunday, for the collection. Good afternoon—good-bye, Ephraim." Miss Matchlock dropped the great cent in her pocket, where it found a queer variety of companions. She passed down the steps and out upon a "sidewalk" of narrow, resonant boards; putting up her stout, black sunshade. As Miss Malvina walked away, somehow she seemed more tall, erect and solitary than usual—advancing alone up the street of sparse, white houses.

Deacon Shem approached the windows. He followed her figure an instant with his look, rubbing his short nose... "Never saw the woman yit who wouldn't git *all* she could—and keep *all* she could git!" he observed philosophically, though with no reproach in his purring voice.

Ephraim laughed. "That's about it Deacon. But I wouldn't begrudge Miss Malvina considerable more'n a copper cent. She's a fine old soul, ain't she now?"

"Yes, she is. Surely! But the finest-souled woman in creation, Ephraim, is quite enough of a woman not to thank you for calling even her soul old', when she ain't fifty," admonished the Deacon drily. "Better not do it to her face, at any rate! It'll make a draught around you. What did Paul Sargent say about the eggs? Oh, over there, are they? Well, fetch the basket back. We'll count 'em over carefully, since they're from Paul Sargent."

Meantime Miss Malvina was stepping briskly forward. She nodded punctiliously in reply to salutations from the occupants of this or that window or front porch. She exchanged a word or two with neighbors that met her. Once she stopped and plucked a handful of that little purplish-blue flower called sometimes in rural botany "friendship," that had put forth modestly some particularly thriving blossoms. Soon Miss Malvina had progressed beyond the last house really in the village, and had entered upon the eighth of a mile of straight highway leading to her own dwelling; a square substantial brick one, standing with a certain awkward impressiveness behind a row of poplars between it and the road. That house looked a serious, sober-minded sort altogether, yet by no means gloomy. Indeed it was like Miss Matchlock herself. She often felt a vague consciousness of the resemblance, even if she did not incline to study it out. Adjoining the dwelling were ample sheds and stabling, though Miss Malvina kept no horses.

Orchard, meadow, wood-lot and other numerous acres, lay about these. The Johnsboro people used to remark that it was a pretty large place for the home of only one woman; it was so.

Miss Matchlock walked up the gravelled garden-path, taking note on the way of the luxuriance of her zinnias and dahlias. A fresh-faced woman, much younger, in a blue print-gown, came quickly down from the side-door. She was the lady's "help"—otherwise Lodemia Tyler. Lodemia wore an especially smart hat; she carried a handkerchief-bundle delicately, in one hand.

"Oh, you're off, are you, Lodemy?" asked her mistress, surveying the girl approvingly. "Sorry if I've kept you waiting. I stopped at the Plaisteds, goin' up to the store. You'll be back next Saturday, you say?"

"Yes, ma'am," replied the girl. "The weddin'll be well over and done with by that time, I expect. I hope you'll get along easy without me, Miss Malvina. I've left everything as handy for you as I can."

Miss Matchlock watched Lodemia for a few moments, as that brisk handmaid hurried down the road. Lodemia (in classic spelling "Laodomia") was urged home for a few days, to share in a cousin's nuptial festivities. Lodemia turned about—waved her hand—vanished behind the hedges. Miss Malvina marched into the front hall, laid aside her street-gear, and betook herself with her "groceries," into the kitchen.

"All by ourselves to-night, William the Silent!" she said cheerfully to a brindled cat—large, fat and exceedingly wide-awake—sitting with impressive decorum on a sill. William the Silent opened his mouth

in sign of reply. Sounds rarely proceeded from William the Silent—an amiable reserve adopted from early kittenhood, and a trait which had won him his historic name. William the Silent never mewed, except on strong provocation—such as his belated return to the house at night, and the consequent fact of being locked out on the gelid doorstep. But being too well-bred a cat not to recognize the honor of any address from his mistress, William the Silent always went through the mute show of a reply.

Miss Malvina put the flower-sprigs in water. Then she set about getting supper. Now and then she gave William the Silent a pat with the back of her hand, and mentioned something to him. Sometimes she sang a bit of a song, or hummed a rather lively hymn. Sometimes she inspected a dish or an article of food, narrowly, to be sure that it was in its normal state of utter cleanliness and excellence.

"There! We're all ready, William!" she remarked presently. "Here's your chair, my gentleman! One—two—*three!* Jump!" William the Silent seated himself. He did not join audibly in the grace that Miss Malvina said aloud before the meal. But William thought that Miss Matchlock spoke to him; so he opened his mouth twice, with great propriety, during that little devotional ceremony.

II.

For fourteen years more or less, Miss Matchlock had lived in that square, brick house. She was respected by all Johnsboro; but she was intimate with nobody, as intimacy goes in such communities. Most

of her neighbors probably supposed Miss Malvina's history to be tellable in a dozen sentences. Part of it was so. Up to nearly her twenty-fifth year, Miss Malvina had lived with her grandparents, in another State. The sudden death of these relatives had left Miss Malvina independent—indeed a rich woman. Time passed. Her home grew lonely, melancholy and memory-haunted... So one autumn, after a visit paid to the minister's wife in Johnsboro—its Naomi Drew, now Mrs. Edward Payson Marsh, had been a school-friend—Miss Malvina had sold the property "over across the mountains." She had bought this new abode, at a bargain; and she was soon settled down in Johnsboro to peaceful winters and summers of a reserved, vaguely seclusive life.

A very few people—the minister's wife, the minister, and Deacon Shem Betts (also a girlhood friend)—but surely nobody else in the place—knew another side of Miss Matchlock's story and change of habitation. That story was not without romance. Yet it was a quite commonplace romance.

" 'You see, Malvina grew up on her grandfather's farm expecting to marry a sort of cousin of hers, named Cyrus Martinez.' So spoke the minister's wife to her husband, one evening not long after Miss Matchlock's coming to Johnsboro; imparting to the Reverend Mr. Marsh details that Miss Matchlock specifically had requested to be communicated, in confidence, to her new pastor. ('I'd rather he'd know—yes, Naomi!' Miss Malvina had said.) 'They were engaged—though the engagement wasn't announced. Malvina's grandparents brought up Martinez; sent him to a college, and so on. Then he went off to

Boston, just after the engagement. He must have had poor stuff in him, or else he was tempted more than common. At any events, from the first, he went wrong. In time, Malvina heard a lot of things about Cyrus's doings in college. For one matter, he had a passion for gambling. Well—about a year after being settled down to business in Boston, he was in prison for embezzlement. Cards were the cause. The grandparents and Malvina paid everything, got him out of *that* scrape. A few months later, he was caught in a worse one—same kind. He'd taken—well, I don't know how much money. They couldn't save him that time. I knew that even Malvina felt it was useless. It was a cruel shock to her and to the grandparents. The old people were overwhelmed by the disgrace. It had a good deal to do with their dying, one after another, so unexpectedly; even if Grandfather Matchlock was nearly eighty. As for Malvina, she must have made up her mind never to say or hear a word about Cyrus again. [“My dear, it was the only sensible thing for her to do!”—interpolated the Reverend Edward.] Cyrus went to the penitentiary; sentenced for a long term. About his coming out finally—or if he died there—I've never known... Malvina? Oh she's never seen him nor spoken his name, as far as I know, except to me—very seldom that—ever since. Once I said to her, ‘it was a shock to have two people die so suddenly in the family-circle’—as had happened in hers. “You mean *three*,” she said—quite calmly, but in such a tone! That was long ago. I don't know if Martinez really is in this mortal world, by this time. I've an idea he didn't outlast his term. He wasn't a strong man... Wherever

he is, I don't believe she thinks of him often nowadays. Malvina always had a perfect horror of anything a bit dishonest or disgraceful or bad. That quality, along with great resolution. Why, when she was only a mere chit of a school-girl if she'd settled what was the sensible thing for her to do, she acted up to every half-inch of it! Yet she's not a bit a hard-hearted woman... Oh, I hope she'll be happy in Johnsboro. No, I never met Cyrus... He was away, off at his college, both times I visited Malvina. But I remember seeing a daguerrotype of him. He was a handsome fellow. A good scholar, people said... Wasn't it hard for her?"

"Very hard," replied the Reverend Edward—absently. Then he added reflectively, "She's a mighty good woman, dear." A little later, when Mrs. Naomi was thinking of quite other topics, the minister suddenly said, as to himself—"Naomi, I—I wonder if that Martinez man's alive?"

III.

Miss Malvina dried and shelved the dishes. She watered some of the less hardy petunias in the garden. She read the county-paper through. William the Silent sat in stately attendance during each employment except the last, for which he substituted a philosophic walk and an adventure with an obese toad. On came a calm dusk. Miss Matchlock lighted the lamps in the sitting-room, and reverted to a ripped pillow-case. Her thimble was not at hand. After some pains in searching, she abruptly emptied forth her pocket. The great copper cent, from Deacon

Shem's store, dropped resonantly to the thin ingrain carpet, and rolled serenely toward a base-board.

"Well, upon my word!" Miss Malvina ejaculated. "If there isn't that great big copper! I'd forgot all about it." She went down on her knees to recover it. It was not easily dislodged.

"All the good luck I've got from you, so far, is a hunt after you!" she exclaimed—at last grasping it, and resuming, with a flushed face, her seat and her work. She laid the great cent on the table. The linen mended, she turned to her long strip of white "edging" and diligently punched eyelets and bordered them. In the course of an hour, she suddenly bethought herself of an item not recorded by her, as Treasurer of the Johnshoro Home Missionary Society. She caught up the book hastily. The luck-penny darted—inexplicably—from somewhere in the neighborhood, fell, and trundled swiftly to quite the darkest side of the room.

"Botheration take you!" Miss Matchlock murmured sharply—"though I've no business to half-swear at anything. Now where have you gone to?"

The agile copper eluded first her eyes, then her pursuing fingers. It was needful to move a heavy "dresser" to bring the fugitive within grasp.

"Next time you fall from anywhere, I'll let you stay where you want to go to!" thought Miss Malvina this time. Quite crimson and a little breathless from these new efforts, she laid by the runaway with a rebuking snap. "If that 'certain woman' in the Bible had thirty pieces of silver all as lively as you, she'd a-set her house afire with that lighted candle, before getting her money together! A penny

saved is a penny got, they say. I hope so! I'll give you back to Shem Betts to-morrow—with whatever luck's in you... Luck? I hate that heathen word! As if whatever comes to us in this world didn't come straight from the hand of God! I say it again—luck's the Lord."

By the time the account-book was laid by, bed-hour had come. The clock struck. Miss Malvina rose and wound it. In passing, she looked out through the window. A few lights twinkled far up the road, where neighbors had their homes, none near her own. Tree-toads were noisy in the maples, loud katy-dids concerting with them. It was a dark night, promising a cold and rainy morning.

"A poor day for that wedding at the Tylers," Miss Malvina said to herself, drawing the last bolts. Lodemia's bread-pan inspected, the kitchen was left in geometrical order. She put out the lamp, took a candle, and set foot on the stairs to the second story. The candle caricatured her strong profile on the wall. A stray draught nearly left her in darkness as she mounted, and a bat darting out of a window made her catch her breath. "Sakes! How nervous I am about little things at night, ever since I read about how that Wilcox house was entered, last June 1... Kitty, do get out from under my feet!" she added sharply to William the Silent; for William was conscientiously escorting her, ascending *pari passu*, as she did—with a subdued demeanor but a high tail.

The solitary lady and the big cat traversed the upper landing. Before them stood a "claw-foot" table. On it was a huge, silver-gilt "salver"—the relic of Grandmother Matchlock's festal "teas," and of

other occasions of state. Lately it had shown a damaged constitution.

"There!" soliloquized Miss Malvina, laying her hand on the big tray, and bearing it into the spare-room, "Why couldn't I think of that on Tuesday? And I dare say I'll go and forget it again. Wait now—there's the iron washstand that Sharp's to fixer to-morrow. I'll remember both. That break in the rim must be fixed up somehow."

Miss Malvina deposited the salver, large as Ajax's shield, on the stand. With the action, down on the salver fell the luck-penny, slipping from between the leaves of the fat account-book where it had been snugly ensconced. A bi-metallic clang rang through the still hallway.

Miss Matchlock fairly cleared the floor in her jump. Even the trustful William the Silent fled back toward the hall.

"I know one thing!—I won't touch you again!"—Miss Malvina declared to herself, half amused, half annoyed at her nervousness. She set the whimsical old coin gingerly on the edge of a tall chest of drawers. The cent's dull eye, catching the candle's gleam, seemed to wink at her—ominously. She went to her own front chamber, across the hall, and so to bed.

IV.

What ailed Miss Matchlock's head, ordinarily so calm, that night? She never attempted to explain her mood as a quite natural phenomenon; in any case it was no normal status for her. Something eerie came over her whole being—unkindly, forebodingly. No

mere physical discomfort filled her slumber with those visions of men in masks, who moved about her bed ; who laid huge old-fashioned copper cents in rows, up and down the quilt, with grotesque gestures to her ; who shook in her quivering face red account-books and, worse yet, pistols and handcuffs !—all adorned with copper cents ; who compelled her to witness the plundering of her premises by the help of old-fashioned tea-salvers, with eccentric copper cents careering and cascading around the patterns.

Poor Miss Malvina dozed, slept, dreamed, struggled, gasped, muttered agonized appeals and outcries, and awoke—more or less—all in comfortless succession. She was just in a drowsy, intermediate state between wretched half-sleepiness and the consciousness that she had heard the far village-clock strike three, when every faculty she possessed suddenly quickened to sharp, terrified vigilance. Miss Malvina started up in bed. For a clear, hard metallic sound had caught her ears—a sound coming through the open transom over her locked door. It was the pernicious old cent ! Her thought sprang to it, to the exclusion of any other swift theory. Yes—the copper coin must have fallen, once more ! Once more it had struck upon the salver. The tocsin was loud—unmistakable. So falling, the luck-penny had been knocked down ! Knocked down ? How ? By whom ? At such an hour ! In a house that night not lawfully of any other human habitant except herself ! Ha !.. Listen !.. Listen ! Yes !—a faint after-commotion in the spare-room was following the clatter. Miss Matchlock put out her trembling hand stealthily, down to a basket by the

bed's foot. William the Silent lay there as usual : though William too was palpably awake. Only one explanation of what had just been heard could be possible. There was—oh, contingency oftens so harrowing to the female mind!—there really was, at last and for no good—"a man in the house!"

V.

For a moment Miss Matchlock's breath came and went hard. Then she effected the process that the masculine sex contradictorily term "pulling oneself together." She listened again—seated upright in her bed, endeavouring not to allow a muscle to quiver. Yes—no mistake! Steps and other movements, the sound of a drawer sliding into its grooves—her straining ears caught unmistakably such tokens of the spare-chamber's stealthy and marauding occupancy. Alone!—no neighbors within call—Miss Malvina's situation, if strong thieves were under her roof, was dangerous indeed.

But while she realized that fact and quaked in yielding to a natural timorousness, Miss Malvina was not disposed to be the victim of her own cowardice. No! Possessions like the Matchlock silver-service, Grandfather Matchlock's gold snuff-box and repeater, Great-aunt Despard's miniature set with pearls, her watch—handsome, if not over-numerous other valuables—should not be reft from her without some dissent. Miss Malvina was in a sad fright. But she was not a she-poltroon. She set her teeth, so to say. She stepped out of her bed, with scarcely a rustle of the linen. She drew on her

wrapper. William the Silent sat up in surprise, in the dark, as he perceived his mistress's unusual movements. She did not know it till she touched William's large, round head with her ice-cold palm. "Sh-h-h, Kitty!..." she whispered, in needless fear of William's making audibly anxious—if monosyllabic—inquiry.

Across the room, upon two hooks, hung Grandfather Matchlock's antique gun,—a fine English piece. Each year, Miss Malvina had it thoroughly cleaned, outside and in; and otherwise kept it in perfect order, for the dead's sake. Always on Grandfather Matchlock's birthday, the gun was placed beside his portrait in the parlour, with carnations twined around the stock. General Jackson had given it to Grandfather Matchlock, at New Orleans. One of the girlish eccentricities of Malvina Matchlock had been learning—from Cyrus Martinez—how to shoot. "With my queer name, I'd ought to know *that*!" she had said to Cyrus. Hence a fire-arm as a capable fire-arm, noisy and able to hit something somewhere, had no terrors for Miss Malvina. Moreover she usually kept the gun loaded. She and never failed to fire it off several times on Independance Day; much to the comment of Johnsboro. So here and now, in this vehement moment, self-control and familiarity rallying to her defence, Miss Malvina reached up carefully and securely. She took the gun. She did not light her candle. She slid back her door-lock without even the faintest squeak. She opened the door.

The flash of a lantern fell across the hall. At the same instant, a shadow—a man—dashed out of the spare-room, whence doubtless he had been leaning forward stealthily. He slipped past, like a swift

night-bird, or beast of darkness, leaping to the stair.

"Who's there?... I shall fire!..." rang out quaveringly but sharply Miss Malvina's high voice.

The lantern-light was eclipsed. Miss Malvina heard steps, stumbling down from the stair-top. Pointing the musket low, she fired into the darkness. A cry—the sound of a human creature plunging—then falling at the stair's foot—one long groan of pain—these things assured the terrified woman, craning forward in the hall above, that if she was nearly frightened to death, somebody else was much more seriously affected. Her bullet must have carried!—overtaking the fugitive! Therewith absolute stillness succeeded—an awful stillness, except for loud ejaculations of William, ordinarily the Silent. For William the Silent was experiencing a violent nervous shock, alone in the bedroom—retired to a remote shelf over the east window, with eyes like acetylene lamps, and every claw extended.

Miss Matchlock leaned against the wall. She was none too sure whether she or the interloper below were hit—and killed. Then she set down her weapon and struck a light. She held the candle over the balusters. "Who are you?" she asked again. She strove to put the question with undaunted tone, to impress the culprit that such an incident as making a burglar into a target, in the darkness of the small hours, was no disturbing rarity with her. She was shaking in her slippers.

"Are you hurt—you—man?" she called, peering downward at a dark, huddled heap of something just discernible beside the bottom-step.

Still no reply. "Will you—will you dare to

hurt me—dare to touch me—if I—if I come down to help you? You poor—miserable—wicked—low—wretch—you!” Yet no answer. “Listen—I ask you if you will solemnly promise—not to lay a finger on me—if I come down stairs—just to help you?”—she demanded with increasing courage. She felt almost sure that the wounded man was helpless, unable to move. But how to be wholly certain?

Another groan ascended. After it came a reply, illogical but apparently honest, to Miss Matchlock's catechism. “Touch—you? Don't you see—you've half-killed me?—woman—boy—whatever kind of a creature you are! My leg! My arm! Yes—I—I promise.” And after this came a sound that brought to Miss Matchlock the correct idea that the captive of her bow and spear had fainted.

Five minutes later, a singular spectacle could be viewed by the light of two candles, standing on the tall hat-rack in the hall of that square house on Johnsboro turnpike. Miss Matchlock, in the most simple of allowable night-toilettes, sat on the hall-floor. Beside her lay an unconscious man, stretched along the rug. His right shin was broken by his fall. A cruel wound in his shoulder was bleeding freely, though the person responsible for it was trying to staunch it, materials for hasty surgery beside her. An other element of inconsistency was lent by the fact that the helpless, swooning housebreaker was tied, as to his hands and uninjured leg, by a stout clothes-line, which was also knotted to the newel-post—roped in a manner to put to blush King Gordias. All around and about Miss Malvina and her prisoner were strewn parts of a silver tea-service, with most of

the other matters that she had remembered up stairs, in those instants of dread—and valor—including all her best forks and "company" spoons. An open sack lay near by.

It was an old-fashioned, thorough-going ransacking of her house that had fallen to Miss Malvina! And for its defeat, the sole agent had been the clanging "luck-penny" bestowed by Deacon Shem Betts; a "circulating medium" indeed—one of irrepressible activity. The thief's sleeve had brushed the cent from the edge of the bureau he had been rifling; disposed from his discoveries downstairs to explore the rooms above, more at his convenience. In later time, Miss Matchlock found that mere accident had brought the adventure on her, instead of on another resident, Senator Stoddart, down at Johnsboro's further end; the Senator having (more than he knew) a reputation for "keeping money in his house." The intruder had made a mistake in following a description; he had entered the first house, not the last in the village,—by reckoning from the wrong end of Johnsboro.

But it was no longer only her extraordinary situation, her extreme fear, her efforts at forced kindness to a fellow-creature in wretched plight—that made Malvina Matchlock's heart beat faster and faster. The first sound of the wounded miscreant's voice—that cry "Don't you see you've half-killed me?"—had flashed to her mind an idea far more startling than robbery, personal danger, an involuntary homicide, a questionably scanty costume, or indeed than any thought in many a year. Miss Malvina—leaning over the man, and now chafing his temples, now staunching his hurt—Miss Malvina, pallid

and shaking and staring—dreaded something besides even a death there, before her.... Would the thief ever open his eyes?

He wore a beard. He was not a young law-breaker. Far from that. There were lines and hollows in his face, as far as she could study it. It was a shapely, high-browed head, and the thick grey hair was fine... He moved now and looked about. A new exclamation of anguish came feebly from his lips.

Miss Malvina started back. Look had known look 1 Her thief was Martinez.

He recognized her as speedily, staring upward into an astonished, pitiful, incredulous face—if ever a woman's was such.

"Malvina?...!" he gasped.

"Don't—don't speak to me!" she answered recoiling. "It can't be I... I b'lieve I'm goin' crazy."

Miss Malvina dropped the wet cloth in the basin. She covered her face with her damp fingers. Then, all at once, she began weeping—softly. From the landing overhead two bright round eyes stared down at her and her companion. William the Silent's nerves were calmer now. He descended. He could not remain longer apart from his beloved mistress. For oh!... what was happening to her? But then so much more was happening to Miss Malvina than even William's fine feline perceptions could discover—at least by candle-light.

VI.

The next morning was a rudely stormy one in Johnsboro. A northeaster blew, scurrying through the

mountains. The minister's wife went down to Miss Matchlock's house. Dr. Battle, the village physician, had sent word that "Miss Malvina wanted Mrs. Marsh—without anything to be said about it, except to Mr. Marsh." Mrs. Naomi spent all the day with her old friend. Also Dr. Battle came in—twice... The patient was doing well; but he would need great care during weeks. Doctor Battle was used to confidences, and was apt as to expedients rising from them. Still, in course of the next forty-eight hours Johnsboro people learned—with some surprise—that "Miss Matchlock had "had an old friend o' hers—a relative—come unexpectedly, to pay her a visit. Come from the West, last evening... He'd got pretty severely hurt, soon after arrivin'... Miss Malvina and he'd been makin' an examination of her grandfather's fine old gun—they'd been standin' on the stairs. The old gun went off... But he's goin' to get along all right. Mrs. Marsh's helpin her, and Lodemy Tyler'll be back directly."

Johnsboro was not altogether satisfied with these statements. It is the policy or weakness of such communities to seek that which may lurk, or not, below all winged words. But Johnsboro had to be content. Lodemia Tyler did not "know anything more"—at least, Lodemia said, over and over again, that she didn't. There was only one other member of the family, approachable as a source of enlarged information. That party of course, was William the Silent. But of William's loyal reticence the reader needs no hint. Like Launce's famous "if" as to his dog, in "The Merchant of Venice," William the Silent "shook his tail and said nothing."

During many weeks indeed the stranger in the square house was nursed through pain and fever; and through moral and other psychological crises more acute than those of any bodily wounds. By and by came, in a sense wider and more significant than just the physical, a sick man's sure convalescence. He began to be seen in an easy vehicle, moving slowly about the country roads—with Miss Matchlock. He walked with the minister over the quiet fields. He was furtively studied, sitting in Miss Malvina's pew in the church. Nothing in him excited any dramatic ideas. He was merely "very retiring"—so people said—that handsome, elderly gentleman; the spinster's cousin, 'Mr. Alderton', as everybody came to think of him. It was quite certain, so Dr. Battle said, that Mr. Alderton would always be an invalid. There was "an incurable weakness" in the bone of his left leg, and his "constitution was much impaired."

"He's had a trying sort of life, before coming here to see Miss Malvina. A hard-working man, but unsuccessful in his business. Lately he's given it up. Miss Matchlock—well, she's persuaded him to stay in Johnsboro, for a good rest... Besides, she's nobody else in the world to help along—that's certain!... And she's far too alone in that great, big house! It's really almost dangerous for her. There are so many tramps and burglars about the country nowadays." So spoke Mrs. Marsh, according to occasion. If Miss Matchlock were obliquely questioned, her phrases were much the same.

Johnsboro dropped the unfruitful topic.

The unexpected Mr. Alderton stayed. Johnsboro people grew to like him, though he shunned compa-

nionship. Miss Matchlock and the minister, along with Mrs. Marsh and Dr. Battle, seemed most of his choice for society. Miss Malvina smiled pleasantly as she spoke of him—oftener—here and there. But her smile, like the note of her voice, grew more serious as the weeks passed.

"Yes—he's promised to spend the winter," she said gravely, "but sometimes I'm afraid he can't stay very long anywhere in this world. He's not strong at all. Overwork."

"Edward—I—I wonder if Malvina and he won't—well, won't marry each other some day before long? Yes—just that! Very quietly, of course—no fuss at all... His old life of evil and of disgrace, and her long, long years of solitude and deferred hopes and shamed love, all cast behind them! To be happy awhile together, Edward, even at so late an hour?"

So queried Mrs. Naomi more than once, in various most private conversations with the Reverend Edward; who however returned but elusively vague opinions as to the likelihood—or wisdom—of such ultimate outcome of the situation. Perhaps Johnsboro in general rather expected such a romantic incident; even if Johnsboro in general had so limited a guess at the underlying drama. But in any case, the two people most concerned in such a problem for Johnsboro's discussion, did nothing of the sort half-anticipated by their neighbours with expressive glances across cups of tea, or a partly packed "missionary-box"; and a "Do you know, I really wouldn't be so

very much surprised— if—well, if Miss Malvina and Mr. Alderton—” All such kind gossip proved false prophecy. Indeed I am not sure that Martinez or Miss Malvina ever thought of such a termination of their experiences. Certainly neither ever spoke of it. It might have been—perhaps; but—it wasn't. Instead of it, during those weeks beneath Malvina Matchlock's care, and in course of months of uplifting companionships and of new horizons for Martinez, something much better came. The reformation of a man was perfected. Martinez had been far more weak than wicked. He had never loved evil. He went easily back—to the good beginning of himself. The mind, as also the life, of the social Ishmael ceased to belong to him. Besides, his days were numbered. Those left him were of an utter penitence. One winter week, only about a half-year after that sudden coming to Johnsboro and to reentrance into Miss Malvina's life, the broken system quietly gave way. The end came kindly, most peacefully ; a golden sunset just drawing on behind the twin Johnsboro hills, that soundless and white afternoon. Miss Malvina and the little group of four other trusted friends stood beside his bed. Miss Malvina drew back her long, strong arm from the pillow that she had been adjusting—her eyes full of tears.

“ Good-night—Malvina dear ! ” he murmured, taking the hand she put into his—“ thank you for everything—for everything ! good-night—till tomorrow.” And so he left her ; even more quietly than he had come.

Miss Matchlock buried him in her own plot, in the village cemetery. She had not lost him ; she


had found him.

For awhile Miss Matchlock did not "go out" socially in Johnsboro, at all. Her watchful neighbours commented a little—not unkindly—on her increased reserve, and on her somewhat prolonged mourning for "Mr. Alderton." But Mr. Alderton was soon out of popular thought; the more generally because, in due course of time, Miss Malvina returned to her usual routine—"growing old" it was said by some—but with new touches of gentleness and of a vaguely lessened angularity; so various observers also declared. In any case, the good lady seemed to age, visibly if calmly, after "Mr. Alderton" had left her and Lodemy Tyler and William the Silent to their quite uneventful days—and nights—in the big square house, never again invaded by alarming guests.

Deacon Shem Betts was wont to ask questions, half-jocose, half-curious—about an ornament that occasionally appeared as part of Miss Matchlock's dress; worn, say, at special festivities under the auspices of the Ladies Social Circle of the church. The ornament was of the nature of a brooch. Deacon Shem suspected its basis to be the identical copper cent he had bestowed on Miss Malvina, that afternoon in the store—her casual "luck penny" from him. The piece—of a significance to Miss Matchlock which she never explained to Johnsboro at large—nevertheless was not easily recognizable. It had been gold-plated, and was somewhat expensively mounted in a gold rim richly worked; fashioned in the manner of a locket. In it was also a plait of fine, gray hair; hair which most of Johnsboro supposed to be a remembrance of Grand-

father—or of Grandmother—Matchlock. There were no initials; but on the reverse of that odd little reliquaire was a date. Under the date was the quaint inscription, "Luck is the Lord."





(TO STAIR STAIR-KERR)

THE OPERATIC RIDDLE OF JULIAN OST.

..." THOUGHT AS MERELY THE VEHICLE OF PAIN"...

I am so weary of guessing at it! I never shall guess it. It spoils days in which I have yet a little of a man's work to do. I try to do that work with all my might, for the reason that makes so many men toil hard—to drive away a worrying thought. But the night comes. Then the riddle enlists my idleness against me once more.

Especially is that enlistment from late November, when the dull red curtain of the city's Opera rises for the long 'season' I have sworn that the riddle shall not nowadays bring me real excitement. Nothing must do that for the sake of anybody or of anything. To find *that* coming on, means the dreaded, chronic insomnia—besetting all Osts, sooner or later—and perhaps worse, much worse... Upset nerves—then the upset brain, over and the Ost family's doom... Ah, I must and I will escape *that*!... But meantime my riddle I cannot escape.

I sit in the opera-house, evening by evening. The shimmer of the auditorium is about me, the wide flare of the stage is in front. Voices of great singers and harmonies of the orchestra weave their web—Verdi or Wagner, Gounod or Bizet. The back of your head is

toward me; you are some rows nearer the stage than I. We are together, yet apart; two inconspicuous auditors. On goes the music. Music? There is not one 'interrogation'—I believe the learned call it such—in any score, not one passionate question of violins, no sombre query of horn, no mocking demand of the fagotto—that Mephistopheles of the orchestra—which to my intent ear says now anything so insistently as just my riddle! What is my riddle? Oh, that is ever a secret; albeit so well-shared by the orchestra's instruments. As for outer, common intelligences—to mere men and women—it is known only to me and to you.

Yes! Let libretto and scenic situation be what they may be. All the music of all operas, of all symphonies, of all songs, was written solely to utter just a query of one miserable man's heart! Scores have covered paper only because some day one wretched man—I, Julian Ost—should sit hearing them, waiting for a time to ask the question that they ask, but which I cannot ask *you* again. Mozart or Gluck, Donizetti, Verdi, Ponchielli, all others too—have been fruitful of what to the world is music, just because *I* yearn for a phrase in it that will be my peace. Because my riddle's mere answer will be my peace, whatever it shall say. After all, I need only a 'yes' or a 'no'! So little! Will opera-house or concert-room grant it?... Well, meantime I am eating my heart out; uncertain, waiting on what no music seems quite ready to tell me. Yet by waiting, I live. When answered, shall I die? Or must I die unanswered...?

Or unanswered—go mad? Madness—particularly the tendency to monomania that becomes mania—oh, yes, it is a fine old family-inheritance for

all the Osis. For that matter, or any other, I am almost the last of them, unlucky breed!

By your side is another man. He was indeed a creature of earth when you married him. The art that he is pleased to affect to admire, for a marital policy's sham sake, has not refined him. He looks even a coarser vulgarian than he was ten years ago. You? Oh, you have not much altered. Stay—you *have* altered! The gold of your bright hair is a shade dimmer. I see your profile when you turn, and its line is less lovely; there is hollowness in your cheek. You carry your head higher than when you and I were auditors over there; but it is poised wearily—I think. Your eyes? O, I never see them now; they would not answer my riddle...

Meetings for us? God be praised, none nearer!—I make *that* my affair! We never are closer to meeting than when in this place, during these seven years. You always have your back to me. For you there seems no Opera House behind the first row, no discernible boxes save what you scan—so little—strictly to right or to left.

For you I too do not exist? Have not existed?

Perhaps I should decide so. But it is hard. Would that I could regard the past as you do so much of the great Opera. Then maybe I should have no riddle to drive me restless. Oh, oh, if it would only drive me really mad! Why then—then I would go up, up, clear up to there—to that corner of the topmost balcony. So high? What for? To throw myself to your feet! For I believe that in death I would *feel* your glance, as I lay crushed in the passage, at your side. And so, even in your horror, my riddle would be read

for me, at last, by one look from you!

This hateful, hellish, flashing, public music-place! This Vanity Fair of so many thousands! To think that such is now the theatre of a man's wretchedness, of his gropings after a truth! But by a delicate irony this same Opera was once so much a part of your life with me, and of mine with you, that its rich and nightly music-making was as if for our ears alone. *Our* cruel drama played itself here, not a little. Here my riddle obtained its pretty little lyric colouring. At the head of that side-stair one night—the second year of my being your father's secretary—you said to me softly, "I love you!"—as we came out together behind your father, before the last scene of "*Lohengrin*." Another evening, as we glided back to your father's box, you paused outside the door; and you said to me, "Listen!—Marguerite is singing—"*Je veux t'aimer...!*" I too will sing it to you, beloved." You sang in a whisper in my ear the languorous phrases, as if they spoke your very heart entering into mine.

It was from that box, too, that you pointed once to the man who sits by your side to-night.

"My brother, you remember, knew him... I used to see more than I liked of him. However—Bertram dead, my aversion became indifference. I had never before hated anybody in the world... Oh, I mean it—*hated!* But that man—I!"

You did not end your slow sentence.

In this same theater, seasons after you and I had been music-hunters all over Europe, wherever your father's affairs or his caprices might carry our party, came that other evening, in which you looked at me,

and passed me by, without a sign of recognition by glance or word. *Then...!* The rose falling dead as one touches it!—That night began to stab me to the soul—my riddle.

Ah, well! Instead of all that, let my memory slip back to kindler days... I see you and myself meeting for the first time. Your father presented us in his library, on the morning after I had become his secretary. We had been writing down various duties he wished to commit to me. You came in, a score of some opera under your arm; and so summer and music together entered my heart and life.

"My daughter is extremely fond of music," said your father—"while I am only a sluggish dilettante. You will soon have an extra office, I fancy—an artistic one as my delegate—this young lady's escort to half the music of two continents."

So it was, in fact. Your father had some liking for music, curious in a finance-king whose youth had been spent in stock-broking. But he was in ill health and juggling with great interests; separated from them by many thousand miles. Week by week, as he left us to ourselves, I entered indeed more and more into your musical life... Why did your father throw us together? He thought—no, he seemed to think—the friendship justified by what he knew of an old schoolmate's son. A kindred spirit, a calm cavalier at your side; a poor gentleman, not daring even a little to lift his liking toward your heart? But our friendship began, our love followed; and your whole

life changed. For—have you not said it to me, a thousand times?—that it was I who taught you to feel music while you thought music?—I who was your heart's guide in paths otherwise never to know its feet!

"I love you. I shall be your wife... Julian, I was born only to be your wife." That silent compact!...

So passed four years. And your father looked on, as if seeing all; as wishing all, waiting only for me to speak for us two. But you were not seventeen when I had met you. Waiting was right—and to wait was my happiness.

"Say nothing to him—nothing—till I bid you speak, Julian. I shall know better than you when the right moment comes. Wait."

I obeyed you. The world about us must have said more, or less, or much. Detached from its social life, as we were, we said nothing. "Wait, Julian."

It was a waiting in music: for music was the ambient element in which our lives were lived. We rambled from one capital to another; but they were always music's capitals. Your father's health-pilgrimage, or his whim, might change our *milieu*; but it was ever one of voices and orchestras... We sailed homeward, day by day, nearer the westward, ever in a golden haze, into the dreamland of my confidence in the future, into the mirage of my faith in you and in love and in life!

Yet all this time, as I have said, not a sign of dissent, none even of notice—from that one person who long before should well have spoken—your father.

But his hour came! One night he called me to him. Distressed, haggard, he told me a story. From his enemies, he was menaced by an attack as cowardly as it was skilfully planned. They were foes ready to put before the world past events ruinously to his shame. A great humiliation for you also, a disgrace undeserved as sudden, was part of the plot. He could open to you only vague, outward aspects of the matter; he could not tell you of all that brooded in the cloud's black depths. There was enough ill that must be said to you, without *that*....!

But luckily he had been warned. There was time! And so that fine, adroit brain had devised a course that might stifle the whole odious scandal before a syllable could reach your ear. But there must be employed an agent; a friend, in every sense. In my discretion and loyalty therefore lay his hope. Would I act, for you, for him?

"You will save her and save me, Julian!" he repeated. "She shall never know from just *what*. But I shall always know."

I grew vaguely solicitous for myself. There were two aspects of this counter-plot. I spoke out my misgivings.

"Even should I succeed in what you ask, I can find myself only too easily in an equivocal light; before those whose opinion is almost everything to me. Worse, even your daughter can misconstrue my responsibility." So I spoke, anxiously.

"Folly, Julian!" he answered. Do you not see that by one word from me all will be clear?... My dear Ost, your honor, your chivalry are safe! Hero certainly has a faith in you that needs no strengthening

from me! I have long thought the—well, shall I say understanding?—between you and Hero to be one quite beyond danger. But of all that, my dear boy, of *that*—afterwards! When you will—afterwards."

"I shall depend on you, sir," I answered half-gloomily, half-courageously. "Depend so wholly!"

"You may depend."

I thought, "How little she knows, and needs ever to know!"—as you and I talked together next day; you asking me why I seemed graver and slower of speech to you than usual...

Well—the time came. I kept my word to your father. I did what had to be done... The other day I looked over a file of journals that fastened on what they could wield of those hateful hints. *That* we had guessed for the first of the battle—sooner or later. But they who wrote what they did soon were baffled. We won the fight! The secret that made your father shiver remained his—and my—secret! But presently I read the attacks upon me—comment on *my* work, on my performance of my duty, by my promise to your father! Shamefully and persistently maligned!... Your fathers enemies were routed, but I was to be their vengeance—unless your father defended me. Happily a word from him would suffice.

A word from him! The world seemed turned to darkness when the man who owed me his deliverance from shame looked me in the face, as I demanded his aid. Your father said, smilingly:

"But my dear Julian really you are mistaken! I have, I have had, no intention of vouching for *your* conduct, Julian. How could I do that? I am vastly indebted to your efforts in this tedious muddle... But

you mistake much if you think that I could influence the public as to your character. The less influence, because I am not sure of Hero's approval of your course, my dear Julian—not sure of how all this may appear to her."

Aghast, mute, I listened.

"Another matter. Julian," he went on, so suavely of each tone. "For some time I have fancied that your usefulness here grows worn—hardly justifying now such constant intimacy with us. It has been misconstrued. Could not this episode be helpful to lessen it? Oh, delicately—delicately! But still to lessen? My daughter may or may not be of like opinion. I am not sure. Confer with her, my dear Julian. Perhaps I speak only my own ideas. Talk with Hero, my dear Julian. Go to her, at your earliest convenience. You can trust her judgment."

I faced you that night for the last time in life. Shall I ever forget a syllable of what you said to me?

"You misunderstand all—all!" I cried. "Good God! I see that everything seems now to have been planned to make you misunderstand! You dare to suspect me! Me! A single word from your father, and there would be no more of such a vile fancy! You would see everything aright."

"But my father? What does he say, to set you right, as you call it, Julian?"

"He says nothing. He sends me to you. Do you not believe me?"

Like some pallid statue of your lovely self, you looked at me—smiling. Was it fear, anger, scorn, anguish or shame that blanched your cheek, and made your smile an agony to me if none to you?

"Believe you, Julian? Why not? But I cannot understand your part in this matter; and I have decided that I would rather not try to understand it."

"Do you not at least believe me a man of honor? Could I ever be anything else in anything I might do for your father, for you, for anyone in God's world. Are you mad, Hero? Mad you must be to think—"

"I have given up thinking, Julian."

"That means then that you have given up believing?"

"It may seem so, Julian."

"Your father has broken his faith to me! Shall I break mine to him? Shall I tell you—"

"No, no!" you said quickly. "Why do that? It would make no difference. I am sorry, Julian."

"No difference? Your losing faith in me? Respect for me? Oh Hero, Hero!"

You did not utter a word, nor did you give me a glance.

"Do you not see that everything must be over between you and a man that do not respect—whom you can doubt."

"Have I said that I doubted? I think not, Julian." Then you rose calmly. You gave me your hand calmly. "I must go. Good-bye, Julian."

"You play a part, as never a woman played such part before now! Under what command, Hero? To what end, in God's name?"

"I play no part. Good-bye, Julian."

"You! *You*—ah, ah, you tremble a little! Your rôle crushes you, Hero! You are breaking under it, now, as I speak! Think—God is over us! No more of

such false, hateful folly! Be yourself!

"I am—myself. Good-bye Julian."

I gave an outcry of rage and despair. "It is your father! Oh, betrayed and played false! He has trapped me—you! He would have you false to our love! Will you not fight for it, fight for our love, Hero?"

"Julian, I have no rôle to play. I have no fight to maintain. I have no quarrel with anyone. Above all, no quarrel with my father. Good-bye, Julian."

I left you. It was indeed "good-bye." The next day, I found the door of your father's house shut to me. Within a week, your silence had made me feel vague social mockeries. Within a month, you did not know me. A year later, you were the wife of that man, sitting by you over there, whose name you bear.

Why did you do it? Why did you do it? I ask that half—it is only half—of my riddle to-night. I ask it of myself, of Destiny, of all the rushing violins, tremolant violas, vibrant cellos, sounding yonder! Did you ever love me? Did you never love me? Or did you never love me enough?... Did you turn from me suddenly, in a bewildered horror of me, because you believed me unworthy of you? Your father—did he force you to seem to believe me unworthy? Yet stay! If it was only his tyranny, why did you yield? Your will was his law. What was the darker, deeper leverage? Did you love me, yes, even when you said, 'Good-bye Julian?'

Ah God! How often have I asked that half of my riddle, till thought has become a red fire in my weary brain. If I should yet go mad...? I fear it more and more. When a man is alone in the

world—too much alone in it; alone in its crowds or solitudes; alone when he goes to sleep at night; and wakes up in the morning (if he has slept) feeling himself so horribly, hopelessly alone!—and if all the time he keeps on thinking of just one thing, just one beating it about, over and over in his tired brain, his heavy, quivering, throbbing heart; his life, under sunlight or starlight or the abyss of darkness overhead, become one question that he keeps to himself... why, he easily drifts to madness! Oh, it is logical—eh? One goes mad so, quite easily. Well, to be mad may mean to be happier—to have forgotten, to be riddleless!

The other half of the riddle?—demanded by every pulsation of orchestra and heart? It is easy to guess what it is! This: "Are you now free from all thought of me, all care of me, from all tender, anguishful remembrance of our past?"

Alas! I read that moiety of the riddle no better than I do the other!

No wonder. For I remember how, once upon a time, in days when we had grown half-willing to show our souls, you said to me, "If ever I am unhappy after I am married, one person shall never be able to see it. I mean—you, Julian!"

"Ah, but I *shall* see it!" I replied, smiling a little, not accepting either clause of your prophecy. For already I could not picture you as married to another.

Are you keeping your word? I cannot keep mine!

It seems a shame to think so seriously here. God! If I could only listen—not think, too! But I

fancy that most opera-houses, however brilliant, also are great Halls of Shadows. Men and women in plenty must there be who have long ago found that only in the glare of a theater comes to them the free hour to greet the spectres of the past ; to let the heart quiver once more, so unsuspectedly by those close at hand ! Dolorous lives ! Cruel inner wounds never healed nor shown ! Why, as to that, I know some of my neighbours' riddles and sorrows. That pretty woman in rose, who seems lost to all emotion save the charm of the tenor's suave phrases oftenest she hears a voice from a grave in a quiet Southern village, where was buried her heart. That grizzled stock-broker-king—that bored young milliardaire—that young bride whose marriage last year brought all those columns of vulgar print—for each one must a night's music often bring a night's thoughts and riddles—riddles and thoughts !

Music's home is Sorrow's haunt. Droll, when one looks at the matter philosophically... But you my riddle, the queer, operatic riddle of Julian Ost—till death, and perhaps after it—who knows ?—when oh, my riddle did you turn yourself into a musical Sphynx ? And since you have grown to be such, will you never by one chord, by orchestra or singer, thrill me to real life once more, or kill me with the answer ?... Must I really go Elsewhere to know it ?... For—O God !—I must know it ! And I will know it ! Not to know it will soon drive me mad... mad.... Mad, with you there before me, Hero, so sane, so silent !...

For a good while, I have not written anything is this memorandum. At least for what seems to me a good while; how long I am not sure. It may be only a few weeks, perhaps only a few days, possibly many months. To tell the truth, lately I have become queerly confused in keeping all sorts of matters clear in my head... Still, I do not think that anything is really out of order there—not yet. Not seriously out of order. If I had only not forgotten how to sleep! And if I could quit puzzling over my everlasting musical riddle! Also could I get rid of hearing so incessantly those musical questions and musical no-answers, all whirling higgledy-piggledy together—sounding along and along, day and night! All about my riddle; not one bar excepted! Not one! It is *almost* maddening, that!

I am not any more in the City. My unlucky head really went quite wrong there one evening. I was not well—in a concert. I remember I made a disturbance, by proposing to conduct something on the programme—Berlioz's "King Lear" overture, I believe—in the way I think it should be interpreted; so as to answer my riddle—perhaps. The conductor was a blockhead—like most conductors. I pushed him out of his music-desk, and thrashed the idiot—or tried to. Then I was ill—so I understand; shut up in my lodging... They called in a doctor—a specialist about nerves and so on. The doctor—he is a very decent kind of chap—wished me to come up here, to this quiet little country-village, for awhile. He has a sort of big rest-cure here, a sanatorium. He promised

me that I would not hear any music in this place ; but somehow it goes on in my head, just the same. Question and answer, major and minor, phrase and counter-phrase !—bits of a million things that I remember, whether I want to remember them or not. And all referring to my heart's old riddle ! It is very tiresome. Especially as I sleep ill. I wonder indeed if I sleep at all ? The nights are so long, so still, so solitary for me !

As for that other unpleasant affair—with the waiter in the restaurant—why, I never had the least wish to kill the fellow. That is a lie. But he was impudent. I told him—quite civilly—that I could not possibly eat any salad in the key of G major—that all my salads, like my riddle, must be in some sharp and minor tonality—say, in A sharp minor. The man laughed at me, and pretended not to understand. I lost my temper—and I took that knife....

Yes—it is really very quiet here. The other patients—people, I mean—are not objectionable at all, except the lady who has an idea that she is an automobile or an aeroplane. That lady sets up considerable noise, especially if the doctor or an attendant has made her angry.

Lately, all night long, after they have put out the lights in this big place, I lie awake, awake hearing—what ? Why, a vast, superb, mysterious

orchestra! A *real* orchestra, one somewhere very near, though I never can locate it. The doctor asks me not to try. But do you know that same glorious orchestra keeps on playing, playing, playing—playing nothing but about a million fragments of different things, absolutely disconnected, crazily unlike—jewels and rubbish—music from all sorts of composers and from all the epochs you like—Pergolesi to Sullivan, Cilea, Wagner, Wolff-Ferrari, Richard Strauss, Dukas Reger, Schoenberg—opera-bouffe to masses! It runs on, a vile medley, like those tasteless, idiotic potpourris that the Germans so love for their damnable coffee-guzzling, with “Kleinesgebäck...” And the worst of it is that, after all, *my* musical-mosaics so played are nothing but questions! Nothing but questions! No responses, no affirmations—never any up and down reply to brain and heart. My cruel riddle!... Still, I begin to think the cursed thing will be answered in A sharp minor. So I listen most carefully to whatever is in that key. But so far, no use!

...Oh, My God! If I could only stop thinking! Thought as merely the vehicle of pain!...

No, I do not believe I am really mad, or going mad—not just yet, though lately I have been a little afraid of it. (Query: Why be afraid of it?) I suppose that this institution I am stopping in, really is a sort of agreeable, good-class madhouse. I suspect it. The hotel-clerks must have known that, when they talked to the doctor and me, persua-

ding me to come here to be under his care a bit... I have found out that one is not allowed to go out of the establishment. It has gates and barred windows and such like. The walls are high enough, back of all the sombre garden and grove. However, to stay on isn't any hardship to me. I grew bored and angry before I came here, by the way people stared at me and whispered behind my back... That ugly row in the hotel tea-room, when the girl at the next table said so rudely "Look at his eyes, Jack! They're not the eyes of a man whose sane, I tell you!" Oh, I heard her. I was quite furious I know. It was some excuse for my throwing the caraffe at her, I think; and for the rest of the unpleasant scene that I suppose I made. I am sorry.

After all, where could I better be, ill or well? If in my sound senses, or if what people call "unbalanced with a tendency to sudden violence?"—as I heard one of the attendants here speak of my "case" this morning. Going mad or mad? Out of this madhouse, or in it, I am alone in the world. So horribly alone! Since when have I not been the last man of my family—last male of the doomed Osts! The lawyers who manage my annuity, why, they are the only human beings that I can think of who are enough interested in me to care to know if I am judged a lunatic or sane. I dare say they have their ideas about *that*, by this time... So hopelessly alone!—whether I die here a *non compos*, or out there in the world—with my riddle to die too.

I do not think I have slept much this week. Easier to walk up and down my room all night. There is a passage in the violin-concerto of Brahms that might help me, if it went a little further... It stops short, unluckily... Oh, if I could only hear the answer to my riddle trumpeted out some night, as I lie here awake! Hear it proclaimed to me, and to the world, as comes that sublimely climactic chorale of the brass in one of Bruckner's symphonies! Possibly I should study more attentively that stupendous Bruckner finale. Or in the "*Dona nobis pacem*" in Beethoven's D minor Mass? Or, above all, discover what is lurking for my soul, dolorously deaf, in that overwhelming "*Salva me, fons pietatis!*—*Salva me!*—*Salva me!*" in Verdi's Manzoni Requiem. Oh, there Verdi has cried out to God, to Fate, out from whatever can be of despairing perdition, to whatsoever can be of omnipotent redemption—" *Salva me!...*"

Everything in me, if monomaniac or quite sane, harks back to music! Is it a good sign, or bad? The doctor desires me not to consider the matter.

Mad, or going mad? I? What rubbish. On the contrary, I reason, I reflect, I am able to penetrate things infinitely more clearly than ever I have done in my whole, earlier life! For proof, see how easily and calmly, how lucidly I write here whatever passes in my mind. My brain is absolutely all right. I don't even worry so much over my riddle these last weeks. It begins to obsess me less, to seem something quite in retreat, dulled,

already apart from me... I hear my splendid mysterious orchestra a good deal—occasionally all day long; but most of the time I quite forget to what it refers. I don't know now, as I write.

Lately I took a pencil and went all through my scores (the doctor allowed me to bring them, kind fellow!)—marking the places that I feel sure, sure, *sure*, have more or less to do with my riddle—with its great, ever-waiting answer... It is wonderful how many such references there are, and how nearly some of them come to being answers to more things than even my riddle.

Unluckily it's the same disappointing story—they don't go far enough. Perhaps if Beethoven had written that Tenth Symphony—

But in any case my reason is in excellent condition. I told the doctor so this afternoon. He said, "I am sure of it, Mr. Ost. Pray do not worry about yourself, nor about music nor anything else."

How foolish I was to be alarmed about my head! I have been taxing it easily to make a discovery—a great discovery! A discovery, too, purely in abstract mathematics. I believe the business may revolutionize numerical science, indeed all sciences, provided I can formulate it clearly. Just there will be the trouble, perhaps. It is the plain, indisputable fact that all numbers passing for even ones are absolutely odd numbers; while conversely all those numbers which we have computed as odd are fundamentally even ones. In fact, *all* numbers are

practically identical. A vast amount of our differential calculations is completely unnecessary. Thus "one" and "one hundred and one," are the same—proveably. "Three" and "four" are merely identical expressions. One can even count without regard to series—two—nine—seventy-six—a million—all the same thing! Now if this extreme simplification can be applied to harmony, it will revolutionize harmony, melody, everything musical, in all directions and interrelations. Especially as it demonstrates that major and minor tonalities are identical.

Astonishing that nobody has ever lighted on such an aspect before now! Or at least that nobody has demonstrated it! I was talking with the doctor about it. He says it is all admirably scientific and interesting. But he asks me not to work much over it just yet. He thinks it tires my head. It does nothing of the sort.

If one can combine pythagorean resolutions of, say, chords of the minor seventh (I have been dealing with them to-day) and so makes a kind of double and equilateral equation of a tetrachord—which however must not be too mauve in key—and then if you also will apply the abstract to any interrogative musical cadence—precisely such as has been my riddle always—why, then you will find that every orchestral score *reversed*—becomes perfectly playable and with harmonic effects far, far transcending anything that the composer has put into them in writing for their normal performance. My orchestra does me the Vorspiel to "Tristan"

in that way each evening. It is magnificent—out of all description! And so simple to manage. Just turn your score upside down.

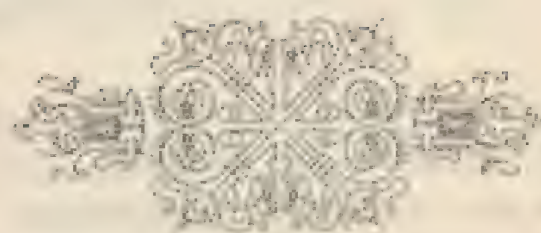
I do not think that I shall be able go on with this memorandum. At least not at present. The doctor does not like my writing so much. It is odd; for nowadays I feel so calm and clear-headed. Nothing seems to make me unhappy as something did—well, I am not sure just what it was—at any rate awhile ago, before I came here. Months? Or years? I don't know, it don't matter.

To be quite honest with myself, sometimes as I write, or try to read a bit of music, I suspect that perhaps I am not so far away from mad as I have supposed. Mad people are often quite happy. What has driven them mad has ceased to be distinct in their thoughts, either as an odd harmonic number or an even one, I expect. It would depend on the instrumentation for all that. I have an idea that there is something I am still wishing for; but just now, for the life of me, I cannot tell anybody what it is—cannot tell even the doctor. At least, not to-day. Possibly tomorrow....

[Here Ost's diary ends illegibly—a muddle of disconnected, mad phrases, of meaningless mathematical formulas, music-pottings, memoranda of vague orchestral effects, and so on.]

.
 timpani pianissimi flauti
 Unfortunately am not always....

Salva me, fons pietatis! Salva me—





(TO JUSTUS MÜLLER: ART. 14).

"A CAT MAY LOOK AT A KING : "

HOW THAT SAYING ORIGINATED. *

As Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in his amusing "Just-So Stories," has paid respect to the distinguished individuality of the Cat, I feel that I am supported by august discernment in re-printing here another honourable cat-history—which however was in print many years earlier than Mr. Kipling's available tribute.

E. P.-S.

MANY thousand years ago, when men and beasts and birds all dwelt together in good-fellowship and spoke the same tongue, it came about that the King of the great country of Nessunaparte took it into his royal head to invite the Bear, the Stag, the Ape, and the Cat, with many other creatures, to live comfortably and honourably at Court with him. The Bear he created Minister of War; the Stag he made Chief Postman; the Ape became Lord Chancellor; and the Cat was styled a Confidential Chamberlain. Several of the other animals also obtained high positions.

But not long had the four enjoyed these honours before the Ape, evil as usual, began scheming how to achieve better credit with the King and the Court

* From "*Harper's Young People*"—March 4, 1884.

than the other beasts enjoyed ; and especially how, at the same time, he might cause the Bear, the Stag, and the Cat to lose the royal favor. This selfish wish filled the Ape's thoughts by day and night.

After long reflection, he settled upon a plan. One fine day, he slyly remarked to the King—"May it please your Majesty, don't you think it would be amusing to hold a kind of friendly trial of skill—of talents, gifts, capabilities to do things—say, in the palace, this evening? One in which each of us creatures, beginning with my Lord Bear, my Lord Stag, Chamberlain Cat, and your devoted servant, shall endeavour to perform some clever little feat or other, for the common admiration and pleasure?"

"Excellent idea!" answered the King smiling, "excellent indeed! For I am told that many of you are wonderfully brilliant."

"And," continued the wily Ape, "in order to prevent any unfair practicing beforehand, let it be a sort of surprise-contest. Let that feat which each is to attempt be written upon a folded paper; such paper to be kept tightly sealed up, and not handed to the contestant in question until the very moment of his turn arrives. Thereupon he shall execute, as best he can, the thing enjoined."

"Very good! Oh, very, very good!" responded his Majesty with emphasis. "Capital idea, my dear Chancellor! But you see, I—I—well, really I do not know what each one of you can most properly undertake. Do you therefore, my Lord Ape, devise a suitable feat—entertaining, suprising—for each competitor you select; and write it within the folded papers. Of course I will give them out

with my own royal hand—though you must manage to indicate to me, my dear Chancellor, what names I am to pick out first."

Now this was precisely what the Ape had most desired. Nevertheless he craftily exclaimed, "Oh, my Lord King! I fear that I shall make awkward blunders, and perhaps—alas!—give but offense if I obey. Yet if your Majesty will graciously promise not to tell anyone that it is not your Majesty who inscribes the commands within the various billets to be opened, why, I will duly prepare them, to the best of my poor intelligence."

So the easy-going King innocently promised; and away glided the Ape to plan deeds of art or of valor for the evening's display.

Now the ever-clever and quiet Cat, sitting motionless beneath the royal chair, with his tail curled around his fore-feet, had overheard this conversation. "Aha! Aha!" said the Cat to himself. "So that is your plan, good my Lord Ape! Oh, base intriguer! But never mind! I will get the better of you, or it shall go hard with me and all cats forever!"

Busy all that afternoon, locked in his chamber, the scheming Ape wrote down for each beast, except his mean self, something thought impossible for that particular animal to perform! For himself, he merely wrote that he should make to the King and all the Court three low and super-graceful bows! The Cat listened eagerly at a certain mouse-hole; and by hearing the Ape spell each word aloud slowly (for the Ape, like many great functionaries, was no good speller) he easily gathered what each creature was expected to do that evening, before the Court. But the

prudent Cat resolved to tell nobody. Indeed he had a better scheme behind his whiskers. He too passed an hour or so in deep privacy, developing plans sagely; all the while washing his face, after the manner of superiour cats to-day, when they have anything particularly important to think about.

When the evening was come and supper was over, the King, the Court, and all the animals assembled in the great hall. The King's young daughter, the Princess Maria Squisita, occupied a golden stool of honor next the throne, as a gracious spectator.

Great was the surprise of all, save the Ape and the Cat, when the King announced how the evening would be passed; and therewith produced from behind the throne a gold and jewelled dish, filled with many little papers, tightly folded and sealed. The buzz of comment, not to say of anxiety, swelled up loudly, despite the august presences; as the King, looking sharply at the little papers, selected one, as if by chance—but not at all so.

But before his Majesty could open that first of the scrolls, the Cat stepped modestly forward. And the Cat said respectfully: "May it please your Majesty and the Court! I have heard with delight this unexpected plan for to-night's amusement. Whatsoever shall fall to my humble lot to attempt, gladly will I undertake! But does not your Majesty think that it also ought to be understood that to whomsoever succeeds in his task shall be given a prize; while should any of us fail in the thing asked of him he shall be driven out from your presence and palace, in perpetual disgrace; and shall never be

permitted to look again upon your royal face?"

"Most properly suggested! Most properly!" exclaimed the King solemnly; "and I add that if any other beast present accomplishes the enjoined act, why, he shall receive the other's lost reward. This is mere justice surely! An admirable idea, my good Chamberlain Cat!—like your suggestions always."

To these rules all the courtiers agreed. The Ape had listened, laughing softly—wickedly. Then came an excited silence as the King arose. He unfolded the first of the sealed papers. Inside it, the Ape had written—"To my Lord Stag. Let him, without delay, leap boldly to the floor, head first, from the golden balcony above the throne."

The poor Stag was aghast. He had never dreamed of such a request in all his life. In utter fear, he advanced timidly. He looked first up, then down. The golden balcony was not less than twoscore feet above the hall-pavement! One jump thence undoubtedly would smash to atoms any stag's beautiful horns, and would break every one of his four thin and long legs—to say nothing of his neck.

"Alas, alas my Lord King!" the Stag was fain to falter out, "Forgive me! But I—I—I cannot even attempt such a feat! Never! Never! It would be my destruction!"

"Can you, my Lord Bear? Or you, Lord Ape? Or you, my noble Chamberlain Cat?" inquired the King. The other two creatures could not but decline. But the Cat exclaimed merrily, "Can I?... I? A Cat? With greatest pleasure, your Majesty!"

In one flash of head and body and tail, the Cat darted down the hall and up into the balcony.

He had leaped down, he was landed on all four feet, —of course unhurt—almost before King and Court could realize what had occurred.—The hall rang with applause! The Ape angrily muttered to himself; he saw that he had made a stupid mistake; in ignorance till that moment, like all the rest of the world, of the unlimited agility of cats. For till then a cat had never once troubled to be acrobatic in public! That a cat could jump after any such fashion—why, nobody had dreamed it! From that moment, people began to say, "Ah, I see how the cat jumps!"

The King raised his scepter to enjoin silence. He unfolded another paper: "To my Lord Bear," it ran. "Run around swiftly enough to catch your own tail."

A stifled court-laugh arose. Of course, the poor Bear, notorious for his clumsiness, had no tail worth his attempting to pursue. Greatly humiliated, he blushed and begged to be excused; reflecting sorrowfully on his coming exile. And the Lord Bear being so unfortunate, neither did the Stag nor the Ape possess a tail long enough to catch! The Ape chattered more angrily than ever, as the Cat, on receiving the royal nod, bounded out before the throne. And the Cat began so merry a race, ending in so dramatic capture of his flying tail, that the Court laughed till their sides ached! Princess Maria Squisita's coiffure shook down in total wreck—from her enthusiastic applause! The King was enchanted. Finally overcome he barely could gasp out, "Oh, Chamberlain — Chamberlain! — pray cease — pray cease! See—I expire with laughing!" The Ape secretly shook his withered fist at the Cat, as the latter

received a rich gift the luckless Lord Bear had lost.

"To the Chamberlain Cat," read his Majesty, from the third paper. "Let him sing us forthwith a beautiful and loud and sweet love-song."

Now up to that day the cat-tribe had been able, or at least was accustomed in public, only to purr and to mew—that last very gently; save when conversing in the language of the Court. Never one really loud sound had cat-throats been known to utter! Their wonderful musical gifts were a profound cat-secret, carefully guarded from the world. Conceive then the fury of the jealous Ape, and the delighted surprise of all the audience, when the Cat proudly replied—"Sing? Sing? I, the Cat? With pleasure, your Majesty! For be it known now that I have hitherto concealed from all the earth perhaps what is my greatest gift. Surely I will sing!—sing one of my finest love-songs!" And with that did the Cat open his mouth, to emit one of those splendid serenades to which evening after evening ever since, our backgardens and roofs have resounded; and which invariably excite such particular emotions in us listeners.

Princess Maria Squisita blushed deeply, as with a bowed head she kept her eyes fixed upon the singer; for the Cat's song contained innumerable allusions to the name, the graces and charms of her Royal Highness—to the tender effect they produced on all who there beheld them. Over and over, one heard the sweet refrain—"Maria!... Ma-a-a-r-i-a!... Ma-a-r-r-i-i-al!"—in a song that every cat loves to sing, even to this day. Ah, no wonder the Princess Squisita toyed with a bracelet in pleasing confusion; while the delighted King and courtiers listened in amazement;

much as nowadays we find our sensations to be when hearing the efforts of many famous Wagner-opera singers; listened till the strains affected them quite too much—in fact overwhelmingly. Thereupon his Majesty begged the minstrel to stop. So again was the Cat a victor, and stepped aside in quite unlimited glory.

Then the King unfolded the fourth paper:

"To my Lord Ape," it began. "Let him advance before the throne, and make three of his lowest and most graceful bows."

The Ape forgot his wrath. He came forth pompously. He bent so low that his hands rested upon the floor, as do the hands of his kind to-day. But lo! when the Ape would have raised himself upright, he found that two pieces of strong wax had been placed just where he was pressing his palms! Vainly did the Ape strive to rise. He made effort after effort in vain—his back turned indecorously to the Court, his head held almost to the ground before the King. The King and all the company burst into loud and long laughter at the sight of such desperate writhings. But soon the King grew indignant and finally enraged, supposing that the Ape had devised a piece of buffoonery, as an insult.

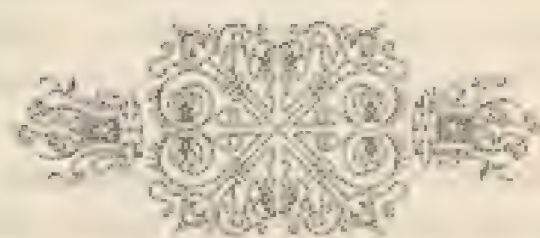
"Ho, there! Take that odious creature away, some of you!" thundered out the King. "I will have no more of so graceless, so unmannerly, a knave!" The miserable Ape was pulled from the floor, howling. But easy is it to imagine how quickly the Cat then sprang out, after the Bear and the Stag had alike declined to redeem their lost credit; how the Cat, keeping warily clear of that dreadful wax,

(somehow put where it was, a few moments before the Ape's activities) made so elegant a series of bows, or else, sitting in dignified stability upon his tail, he waved to all present such graceful salutes with his paws, that the Court was in utter raptures.

" Enough ! " said the King, starting up and tearing to bits the dishful of papers. " You are all pretentious, incapable, disobliging, under-educated, disappointing, vulgar, stupid, awkward, ill-bred animals !—Chamberlain Cat alone excepted ! I will witness no more of your wretched efforts. Away, one and all of you, save my Chamberlain Cat !—the incomparable, unsurpassable Cat !... Never let me catch one of you in my presence, nor even raising eyes to me again ! Upon you alone, you, most accomplished and delightful Chamberlain Cat, shall be lavished for evermore my royal favor ! And further, since you have—I think—just hinted that it would please you to change your bachelor-condition, why, the hand of my daughter, Princess Maria Squisita, shall go along with my perpetual goodwill. Henceforth only Cats shall have a royal right to dwell in the houses of men ! Henceforth only a Cat may so much as look at a King ! "

Thus and thus only was it that a famous proverb arose. Hence is it that only a cat today is officially entitled to stare royalty out of countenance. As for the defeated Ape, his struggles to rise from that fatal bow before the throne permanently injured his backbone ; ever since then no ape has been able to stand perfectly upright.

I know that this story is perfectly true. For did I not see the man who told me it ?





(TO THE HONOURABLE FRANCIS BOWLER KEENE).

KATE DWYER

IT does not need a railroad and the electric light to bring happiness to a village community. Blue Fork's population of something more than two hundred souls, sheltered in a very few dozen farm-houses, possessed neither of the conveniences named; a new hamlet, in touch with no other Nebraska settlement. But the much talked-of peace and prosperity were there; and happiness in superfluity.

Perhaps the two happiest people in it, one October afternoon, were Joe Dwyer and Kate, the daughter of the blacksmith, Lisha Moor. They had just been married up in the green picnic-ground, as the pretty spot behind the little school-house had come to be called. Standing together on the daisy-covered slope, the bride and groom received the congratulations of all the village; a tree waving over their heads, deep the blue sky above and behind them. It had been a fancy of Kate, that outdoor wedding; her father's house was small. And so, after the congratulating and kissing—the children started this—there was a sudden taking hold of hands by everybody, and a gay dance around the

young pair. Kate stood blushing and laughing, Dwyer laughing with her, while a lusty chorus rang out, "Now you're married—you *must* obey—you *must* be true to *all* you say—" and so on. The ancient jingle meant the official ceremony to the youngsters, much more than did the squire's part.

It was dusk when Joe and Kate drove down the road, in Dwyer's buggy, amid cheers and farewells. Dwyer live thirteen miles northward, at Borden's Pond. His new house was there. He had only come to the Pond lately. Dwyer was in fact a stranger in the region. During his looking-around process, before buying his farm, the house of the Blue Fork blacksmith had been his headquarters. Being an energetic fellow, Dwyer had decided to conduct two transactions at the same time—his courting and his "locating." Hence to-day, within a month from his advent, he was both "housed and wived." To be sure, little was known of Dwyer; but that little was good. Every man spoke well of him—except one. That one man was Fletcher, of the Five Buttes Mines, twenty miles away. Quite the conventional, unsuccessful, sneering rival with Kate Moor—if a man, twice refused by a woman who then marries another man suddenly coming into her life, can be called a rival. Fletcher's face darkened and his words were angrily disparaging when Dwyer was in question.

"We're going to be very happy, Joe," Kate said softly, as their wheels left the last of the village behind them.

"I mean that you shall be!" Dwyer answered, equally quietly. Their eyes met. Dwyer and Kate were not rhapsodists, tenderly as their hearts beat for each

other. They understood one another without much open sentimentality. It was not a little Kate's reserve that had endeared her to Dwyer; a trait of her mental balance and poised good-sense. She read with very clear eyes all the unexpressed things in Dwyer's sober nature. The eyes smiled now; and then Dwyer kissed her, without dropping the reins of his new mare. So they spun on over the road, sometimes but a grassy lane.

It grew dark as they came to the Pines. The road to Borden's Pond ran straight through the tract; six miles, with sombre trees closing about the very wheels of the buggy. The dark, gray, serried trunks shut them in. The moon rose. It was a night for a poet's marriage—if poets deserve fairer ones than people to whom life is chiefly prose. How still it was in the woods, save for their talk, and the hoof-beats, and Kate's clear laugh! Now and then they brushed the branches, or a dark bird fluttered up and flew across the bright sky, with a call. In spite of themselves, they grew even more still and more reflective.

Suddenly she spoke. "Do you believe Fletcher will try—to do anything?"

"Anything? What do you mean?"

"Why, try to make trouble for—for you and me? You know he swore he would."

"Nonsense. Let Fletcher swear! What can he do?"

"I don't know. But you heard Jim Hawes—what he told Jim?"

"Fletcher can tell Jim Hawes what he likes! What influence has Fletcher anyway?—except among his

own sort over at the Buttes Mines ! ”

“ He has a good deal—so some folks say, Joe. At least—well, over his way.”

“ Yes, but what of that ? You and I aren’t going to live at Five Buttes—thank the Lord !

“ It’s a rough place, isn’t it ? ”

“ A rough place, and a rougher crowd. There’s little law—and less order. It’s generally so, when a mine starts up. Fletcher has got some hold over a dozen or so of the fellows there. I don’t know what hold it is, except that he has money to lend. I pity his borrowers ! He’s a bad lot, I confess. More men than I know it. Sure ! ”

“ Don’t ! You make me afraid of him ! ” she said, touching his sleeve with her hand.

Dwyer laughed. He chirruped to his horse. Then he kissed his wife again. “ You needn’t be afraid, Kitty,” he said.

They drove into a clearing. The pines had burnt. Bracken and stumps came out silver and ebony, in the moonlight. “ Faster, Chromo ! ” said Dwyer to the mare, which walked now. But as he spoke she shied. Something black started up from the ground.

“ Ha ! Halloa there, you ! ” cried Dwyer, pulling in the mare.

“ Stand ! Or I shoot ! ” the man called back, hanging to the bridle. Kate screamed. She saw in the moonlight the flash of revolvers. In a twinkling, she and Dwyer were motionless, with angry commands bursting forth on each side, hands outstretched, a whole squad of dark forms where only stumps had been an instant earlier. Three or four of the men were mounted.

"Get down out of that buggy!" came the voice of one of the band, from under his rude mask.

"What do you want? Take your hands off that mare!" answered Dwyer, holding up his whip. Dwyer had no pistol with him. There had been no thought of needing that sort of thing, in bringing his bride home through the tranquil Pines!

"Get down out of that buggy, I say! Then you'll find out! If you don't—"

There was a general outbreak of angry voices, seconding the order.

"Do you want me to leave my wife up here? Shame on you, whoever you are!" retorted Dwyer. He thought still that it might be some rough joke, a sort of frontier "shiveree," by some Pond friends in disguise.

"Get down as they tell you, Joe!" said Kate in a low tone. Kate was quivering in every limb, but determined not to faint, nor otherwise to "make a fool of herself." She too thought it might possibly be all rough play.

Dwyer alighted. "Well, here I am!" he said, facing the three foremost figures, whose pistols covered him. A fourth man held the mare. The rest of the assailants were to the right and left. "I haven't but a few dollars on me," he went on. "You can look."

"We're not on that road, thank you!" spoke the ring-leader of the circle. There were quick steps forward and behind—a struggle—an outcry—the latter was Kate's from the buggy—though no one molested her. Dwyer's arms were clutched, and he was held—a prisoner. "Keep cool, Kate!" he man-

aged to call out. He could not hear her say, "I'll—try!" ; but she said it.

All the while Kate was not too terrified to think—to remember with ear as with mind. If it had not been for a suggestion of the familiar in one disguised voice, she would yet have believed in a brutal joke. But Fletcher—and a joke! That was unlikely, if Fletcher were really here! There were men on all sides of her, some looking up at her in the moonlight: but by her terrified, furtive glances she yet could identify none. Still, that one voice...?

"Will you—tell me—just what you want of me?" Dwyer managed to demand again. "You take a dirty coward's time—a man's wedding-trip home—for your foolishness—or worse!"

"In a moment," came the answer. "Is it Jackson's nag?" the same speaker called to two or three of the group, busy about Chromo.

"It's surely Jackson's nag," was the quick answer.

They had turned a lantern on the mare. They were scrutinising her from forelock to hind-hoof, one of their number washing her, here and there, with a sponge dipped in some liquid.

"Jackson's nag? You lie!" called Dwyer indignantly. "For what do you take me?"

"For the fellow who took Jackson's mare, Daylight, over at the Mines, two months ago. For the party that has kept her in hiding ever since. Paint's cheap, friend. Enough of it's here, by G—! You're freed."

"I? I—a horse-thief? Look at me! Are you out of your senses, all of you, no matter who you are?"

This is my own mare, Chromo! She knows her name—see! I bought her! I've had her these six weeks. And I'm Joe Dwyer, of Borden's Pond! Not a man I've met since I came there to live but'll prove it, should give me his good word."

"Don't try that game!" was the slow reply from somebody, evidently the leader in the night's expedition—and blunder? "We're up to all that! And just don't get behind the name of another man, to try to scrape through what you can't slip this time. Read the paper, Number Seven."

Kate's nerves and senses were failing her now—as well they might. She half-saw a plot behind the ruse of a mistake; a plot of diabolic cleverness. It could come but from one mind, it could be carried out but for one motive. She was on the point of denouncing or challenging, of calling out her thought to Fletcher's face. No—that would be premature! She must be calm for a few instants, hoping that a villain's purpose—if it were really purpose—would fail of its own foul audacity.

"Number Seven, read the handbill. Five, take the lantern!"

The man addressed as 'Number Seven' proceeded to read aloud a poster:

"Five Hundred Dollars will be paid for the discovery of the whereabouts of the black mare, Daylight"—[here came her description]—"stolen from me on Sunday night last, by John Cairns, horse-thief, lately escaped from K—County jail. Said Cairns may be travelling with her. Her markings likely may be dyed. Cairns is about twenty-five years old, has dark hair, light eyes, generally changes loca-

tion by riding at night, and several times has had a young lady with him, said to be his wife. He calls himself at present, according to locality, Thayer, Dayer, Dyer, Dwyer, etc. If discovered, under suspicious circumstances, said Cairns should be hung by the gentlemen of the community, before he begins to be too busy.—A. JACKSON, Pilota, Neb."

"John Cairns, do you hear that?" asked the head of the arresting-party. "I guess you won't need to ask any more questions. Here's Jackson's nag—square, white spot on her forehead, two white spots on the right shoulder, white fore-foot—all the rest of the animal's marks—covered with the stuff you keep handy—a little acid soon brings it out all right. Your own description's correct, it might be a looking-glass for you. Yonder's the lady, too. And you call yourself Dwyer, sure enough!—as you've done ever since you came to these parts. More fools the men who don't use their eyes, and put two and two together! Your next to last affair was in Crow County—the trotter of the hotel-keeper in Harmony. Your first one, nearer here, is to be your last anywhere—just one too many—Jackson's mare. Have you got anything more to say for yourself, Cairns?"

Dwyer could not contain himself. He had not yet discerned his enemy's hand in this plot of audacious cunning. He had not met Fletcher more than twice, in his short stay at Blue Fork. Dwyer fancied the whole matter now, not indeed as a jest, but a startling mistake—one that, however, might be ludicrous under other conditions. Just one detail made him reflect hurriedly but worriedly—there was no doubt about the mare!

"I bought that mare six weeks ago, in the hotel at Oak Falls. The man who offered her to me was a stranger. Thief? Maybe he was. If what you say is true—if that is Jackson's mare—why, Jackson shall have her again, as soon as I can get my wife to my house, and can send his horse to him by anybody you choose."

"Rather careless to buy horses of strangers here. You know that, I guess," was the reply. "Have you got anything else to say that's not just brassing it out—Cairns?"

"What's the use of talking to a gang of fellows who will face me down with my being that I am somebody else—till I can prove the mistake?"

"Oh! You can prove it—Cairns?"

"My name is not Cairns! Not even if Cairns may have stolen this mare, and though my name may suit Cairn's taste to travel with. Let's settle this thing as soon as we can, for my wife's sake as well as mine."

"Look here! Does anybody deny that I am Kate Moor, the daughter of Lisha Moor, the blacksmith, at Blue Fork?" came Kate's voice. It had a force of truth, of courage in it that was wonderful. Even now it brought a thrill of pride to her husband to think of having won a woman of such self-control. "At least I was Kate Moor—until I married Joe Dwyer this afternoon; and here we both are, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dwyer, nobody else, either of us, whoever else is here to try to give us the lie! And such a silly lie! A lie from a black heart!"

"We don't know you, madam." Fletcher's

sneering tone brought the blood into Kate's face, even in the dark. Should she yet call the man by *his* name, to his masked face? No—not yet. "I believe a Miss Kate Moor lived over there—maybe the same young woman. I heard of her wedding. To-day, you say? Well, Kate Moor of Blue Fork or not, you've married John Cairns, horse-thief and stealer of Abram Jackson's mare; whether you married him as Joe Dwyer or George Washington."

There was a pause. Dwyer spoke imperatively.

"See here! Some of you take the bridle. Lead us and the mare to Borden's Pond—to my house? I'm expected there. I'll walk or ride, just as you please. When you get to Borden's, you will find you're mistaken."

For it was past the probability of a joke now, this adventure! Dwyer knew it. He hoped that Kate did not grasp the situation; and that any—yet vaguely—earnest advance of it could be fended off. Meantime Kate was measuring all of it—hoping that her husband would nor or could not read the cruel affair right, and that it would be solved without worse words or deeds between the two principals in it.

"No, no, Cairns!" the cold voice of Fletcher responded—"—we don't want unnecessary trouble. You're very likely this Dwyer—also. But, first of all you're—Cairns! So say your prayers Cairns! You swing, Cairns, here and now—in ten minutes! You've come to the end of your tether—Cairns. Number Four, is the rope ready for Cairns?"

"The rope's ready!" responded another of the band.

Dwyer understood now. It flashed on his slower mind in brutal directness. It did not need Kate to tell him that Fletcher of the Buttes Mines, discomfited rival, had sprung to the advantage that some underhanded, questionable channel had brought, exactly in a moment of fierce and brooding hostility. There could be hardly any doubt about the mare, as identical with the animal stolen at Pilota; skilfully disguised in markings, and already obedient to a new name. The Chromo of Joe Dwyer had been verily the Daylight of A. Jackson! The vendor at Oak Falls, whose personality and guarantees of ownership had seemed so satisfactory to Dwyer, had been either the thief, John Cairns, or a pal of that undesirable wanderer of many surnames—including those so dangerous to Dwyer. Yes—like a demon, Walt Fletcher had darted to this leverage of fatal circumstances and of his own command over some hot-headed, wrathful spirits—for whom recent horse-thievings had been a theme of speculation and of a vow of lynch-justice. He was to die—he, Joe Dwyer! He would be hanged here, this night, in the forest; hanged in his young wife's presence; the ghastly tragedy carried out in her agonized sight—save what part the darkness, and perhaps a merciful swoon, would spare to her vision!... He would be hanged; and of the group of those resolute executioners only—perhaps—one would know that from the merciless rope writhed and dangled no rogue, but an honest man, victim of a shameful personal revenge and of darkly irresistible coincidences!

It was so fiendishly thought out!—so perfectly

adjusted—the whole business! Dwyer felt his heart sink.

The subordinates busy with the rope and some other matters, were whispering together.

"Which one of you is Walt Fletcher?" demanded Dwyer suddenly.

"We haven't no names—none of us! Only numbers." So somebody, not Fletcher himself, answered. There was a low, swift laugh from the posse. Kate leaned forward, clutching the seat.

"Are you Walt Fletcher?" persisted Dwyer hotly, questioning the nearest of his captors.

"There isn't anybody of that name in this State, I guess!" was the mocking reply.

"And only one John Cairns in it!" added some remoter voice.

Again a laugh.

Kate interrupted the laugh.

"Let me speak, I say!" she called out from the buggy. Her voice was almost steady. "Listen to me, Walt Fletcher! I know it's you—over there. Oh, I'm sure of it! And you know why, you! Shame on you, Walt Fletcher! I don't wonder you've got a mask over your face. A dirty—devilish—game you're trying to play! You'd better not go too far in it!... Walt Fletcher, do you think I wouldn't know *you*,—your work, your wickedness—anywhere? Know *you*? Surely, Walt Fletcher! And hate you for it all the harder, all the more everlastingly! You swore you'd be revenged, if ever I married anybody except you. Deny *that*, if you dare, Walt Fletcher! You can't! I suppose this is what you call your being revenged—isn't it? But don't you make

revenge spell 'murder,' Walt Fletcher! For if there's any vengeance from God—and He says there is, and that it's His—why, God revenges a crime, a vile cruel crime, such as you're hand's in now!"

"Be still, woman!" called Fletcher. Fletcher did not want those explanations and protests. No!—no matter how discreet nor how convinced of a "John Cairns" identity, then and there, were the associates standing around. He walked swiftly up to the side of the buggy. "If you speak another word, perhaps it'll be the worse for you, madam."

"Then it will be! I call every man here to witness that this is, first and last, a lying plot, a plot against my husband, Joe Dwyer—and against me! A plot of revenge, from Walt Fletcher of Five Buttes Mines, against the innocent man who's married me to-day—whom you, whoever you are, are determined to hang as John Cairns, a horse-thief! On the strength of Walt Fletcher's word and hold on you! And I know that Walt Fletcher, who made the plot, is here, knowing what he does, carrying it out for the sake of revenge on me, Kate Moor that was, Kate Dwyer that is. And all because I've married Joe Dwyer and haven't married Walt Fletcher! It's truth that I speak! So help me God!"

Kate's voice rang out clearly over the heads of that group of startled men. To them—well, after such a speech, Kate really might be the daughter of Moor, the blacksmith at Blue Fork, or she might be some "lady" that the horse-thief, Cairns, "travelled with." But even if unconvinced—hardly attentive to all that protest—some present must have felt sure that a woman who did not faint nor shriek until the

last moment—a wife, or what else, who kept her wits cool, her heart bold, her tongue clear to defend her companion in such a moment—well she was a plucky creature!

But Fletcher had too much at stake to admire Kate's audacity. He sprang up soundlessly into the buggy.

Kate was taken by surprise.

"Get down, get down, you devil!" she screamed, pushing at Fletcher in terror and disgust.

Dwyer struggled in helpless fury. "Coward!" he called to Fletcher. "Cur! Coward!"....

"Oh, I shan't hurt the lady!" Fletcher called down to Dwyer. "Not a finger! She must keep still—that's all! Don't you be afraid for *her*, Cairns. Just think about yourself—while you've time." Then he added softly, in a sharp whisper to Kate, as he held her in her place, "No, don't you be afraid—dearie! I'm quite through with *you*, after I've settled Dwyer. You'll get back home from here, safe and sound. But—without *him*. If you shriek again, though, you'll be sorry, Kitty. It'll only hurry matters. Keep quiet. Much better so."

Kate uttered no cry again. She sat there suffocating, drawing as far away from Fletcher as she could; trembling, her eyes despairing in the darkness, her teeth set, her breath a mere flutter—at Fletcher's mercy!... His mercy. But she was yet capable of thinking.

"Forward!" called Fletcher from beside her. "Number Seven—Number Two—lead the horse! Number Five, put the lanterns out. Look after the prisoner, the rest of you. Carefully!" he added, as

the light vehicle lurched, in leaving the road for the sparsely-cleared tract beside it.

The moon went under a cloud. Dwyer now was furiously protesting. In vain! Frightful visions were rushing into the young man's brain! Was it not all some nightmare? Would he not wake up suddenly, to find himself as yesterday—alone in his own house?—laughing, while he fussed about, remembering that the dawn would bring his wedding-day and Kate Moor, to that new hearth? No, those inflexible hands on his shoulders, impelling him forward like the criminal he was declared to be—the offender who in such regions and conditions of life richly deserves his doom—those sternly tramping feet, the shrouded figures and faces, the buggy with its occupants, now silent—it was no dream! And soon before him closed again, thicker and darker, the circling pines—one tree, at least, standing out ominously solitary...!

His wife! His Kate! His life!... Death so near him, yet Kate at his side... Well, if he must die thus horribly, in Kate's presence, they would let him bid her good-bye! Perhaps, too, in that farewell, he could help her to make one effort at escape for herself; while he—well, possibly he could try to break away, to end the scene by a bullet in his heart, rather than by—a halter. Better to die murdered after one of the world's ordinary ways, than to die hanged!

The procession stopped.

Fletcher spoke from his seat in the buggy.

"Gentlemen of the jury! Are you fully satisfied that the prisoner is John Cairns, the horse-thief, the person described in the poster?"

"We are!"

"Are you satisfied that this is the animal described?—stolen by John Cairns—from A. Jackson, of Pilota?—and that it is in Cairn's possession, here and now?"

"We are!" came a firmer response.

"Is it unanimously agreed that the prisoner deserves to be hanged?"

"By G—, yes!... Up with him!" rose the sullen, truculent chorus of reply.

"The sentence is passed on the prisoner," Fletcher continued. "John Cairns, have you anything to say for yourself?"

"Nothing but what I have said," replied Dwyer. "What you are doing is on your own risk. You are committing a base crime. I am not Cairns. I am not a horse-thief. I bought the mare on good faith. If she was stolen her owner shall have her. I am Joseph Dwyer, of Borden's Pond, married this afternoon to the girl who refused you and who sits there in that buggy, forcibly detained—my wife Kate Moor—Elisha Moor's daughter... And that's all I have to say before you and your accomplices here, or before God up there." Dwyer paused. Then, "I am in your power, Fletcher. Will you allow me a last word with my wife?"

"Let the prisoner speak with the lady, if he wants to," said his triumphant enemy. "Madam, if you move or cry out, we shall give your husband no time for you. As it is—five minutes."

Fletcher withdrew the grasp that had held Kate's hands. He leaned back out of the carriage, on the left. Dwyer was allowed to approach, on the right. He

stood free of those strong hands. Kate leaned to him, shivering, anguishful, despairing almost; yet even now not despairing altogether. A low word or two passed between them. But those words were not of farewell. It was still dark, the clouds hid the stars.

Kate put out her hand softly—so softly! She realized—or might have realised—that her heart had never in its life so stormily beaten. Her fingers touched—felt at—Fletcher's waist. He did not perceive the movement. It was a swift, subtle groping, on a mere chance. She won the chance!

She snatched the revolver out of Fletcher's belt. Fletcher started up with an oath. Kate fired! Fletcher called out, groaned, gasped, cursed, struck vaguely. Vainly trying to save himself from falling, Fletcher dropped between the wheels. Kate fired to right, to left! It was hit or miss, but mostly hit. Dwyer clung to the buggy. The mare went plunging, the return pistol-shots cracked about her ears, about Kate's and Joe's heads. The thickened darkness—the suddenness of the resistance—the fall of Fletcher and of another man—had thrown everything around them into confusion. The mare kicked and leaped in terror, but in liberty. Joe was dragged along like a sack of waste paper. His thighs were between the wheels, his body was shaken as if it would be broken! But it was not broken, he hung on. In a few seconds, he could scramble further into the buggy. The mare had gained the road. She was galloping—bounding—snorting, careering, like the terrified creature she was. But she was on the road—and she was keeping it!

Kate had not fainted even now. Joe held fast her quivering figure and braced himself on the floor

with one arm, clutching in the other hand the revolver that yet had two charges. Brave Kate! Pearl of a wife! Your shots had told, each of them; their fellows could be yet reserved! Dwyer did not try to find the reins that had fallen along the shafts. Let Chromo run! Oh, let Chromo run—run—run!

"I—I—shan't faint—Joe!" said Kate.

But pursuers—mounted and by no means all unready—were after them. How many had been in trim for such a chase? Not more than three or four! The others had had trouble to get to their horses and to mount, in dark and excitement. Still, the pursuit had started, if not sure nor swift. Joe heard cries and hoof-beats, and pistol-shots at random. But Dwyer and Kate had a start of their pursuers. Chromo was even trotting now; breaking occasionally, but not often; and Chromo—formerly Daylight of Pilota, and daughter of a famous racer (as Dwyer came to know) had a trot unmatched in Nebraska. She had already proved that before this fateful night.

Ha! a shot! Dwyer caught the revolver from Kate's hand. He turned—fired at the one man that must be only a few yards behind him. The horse fell, with his rider. Joe had aimed low. "He's down—down, all the same!" came Kate's tense voice.

"Ah!" cried Dwyer, in tremulous excitement, with the stir of hope,— "we'll beat them! Chromo!—Chromo, old girl! Daylight!—Daylight!—if you *are* Daylight!—whichever you are—faster! Kate—my darling—we'll beat them yet!"

The cries and the hoof-beats were decreasing in clearness. They ceased. The moon shone out—

at last. Dwyer swung around a curve. A long straight piece of road, wide of the pines, lay ahead. But what—who—came on there—ahead? Another group of mounted men approaching? They were cheering and laughing loudly; and Joe heard—a band! Yes—three or four cheerful instruments from somewhere—musicians—a wagonfull of people—another wagonfull! Then Joe knew. He was whirling straight into a company of his new neighbours at Borden's Pond, come out, all that way, to meet the young couple gaily, to escort them home in a rude but hearty welcome!

Dwyer managed to check the mare, with lively help. The friends were alarmed indeed by that wild approach of the newly-wedded pair. Each and all shouted—thought it a runaway. Dwyer and Kate were pulled out of the buggy. No pursuer came further, to try conclusions with the stalwart escort, riding so lustily from the Pond. Dwyer held Kate's arm. To the strange history the newcomers listened—open-mouthed. In its middle—not before—Kate took her opportunity to faint, behaving at last like any other woman, after all.

They are living happily as ever two people did, or do, on the farm at Borden's Pond to-day. Of course, the Pond is "quite a place" by this time; and its earlier chronicles (none older than fifty years) sound as myths to the new generation there. The law could not trace out definitively the partners in the assault on Dwyer. It was a matter of evasion

and trickery as to fixing responsibilities; though some three or four of the men at the Mines quietly left the place before the day of the convening of the local Inquiry Committee. Fletcher had been almost instantly killed. Some months later, it came out that he had been a sort of silent partner in the horse-business of Cairns; in constant, profitable touch with all dealings of that objectionable amateur of good animals. A trusty agent of Cairns had conducted the sale of Daylight of Pilota, to the too-hasty Dwyer... Kate thinks of Fletcher with a shudder, even to-day. One must not ask her for the story of her wedding trip. But Dwyer is proud of Kate's shots—though his face is always grave as he says so. The veritable John Cairns ended his days and iniquities—so they happened to hear—in Montana, probably on just such a dwarfish pine-tree as Joe Dwyer might have been discovered swung from, the next day after his adventure. But "might" is a short word for a long one. Dwyer thinks so, as he smooths Daylight-Chromo's coat. Dwyer bought the mare from A. Jackson of Pilota, though she cost him what Joe called "a fierce sum—I thought I'd have to mortgage, to raise it."

However—it is all long ago, this little history. Daylight-Chromo is an old and undisturbed family-dependent now, free of the farm. Often, smoothing her and moving about her, Dwyer thinks over the chances of his life and of Kate's happiness, condensed into those few seconds that followed his being allowed to approach Kate—sitting there beside their malignant enemy. Then Joe's face grows sober soberer still. But he goes into the house, and he looks at his

wife, and she looks at him; and they smile tranquilly; forgetting all troubles, all shadows, everything in this world except that they are both in it—and still together.





(TO MISS LAURA ANNESLEY).

THE "SEVENTEEN-BIRD"

("DER SIEBZEHN-VOGEL"):

A PIOUS TALE WITH A SOCIAL MORAL.

A long, long time ago, in a fine greenwood in Germany, there lived seventeen small German birds with gold feathers and silver legs. They were all near relatives or close friends, or even both—which last is quite wonderful as things go in any kind of two-legged society. They fluttered about the forests together, they hunted their food together, they ate and drank and made love and nested and quarrelled together. They ordered together their clothes from the same tailors and modistes, they sang together duets and trios (for in those days they could sing really beautifully, in fact as never have sung any birds since)—they travelled together North and South, to and from the fashionable resorts of Egypt and Italy and the Riviera; and did all together I don't know what besides. Always together; in a strictly exclusive, smart, superior, contemptuous society of little bird-snobs. In short they were a kind of ornithological admiration-club. So devoted, each to the other, were the seventeen that

they vowed solemnly, not merely never to find the least fault with any member of their select and golden clique, but also never to allow anybody else to find such fault! Along with that mutual understanding they also compacted to keep each other's secrets inviolably; and to "stand by one another, forever and ever and ever," no matter who else in creation or out of it should be against them, with tendencies to criticism. Which are all especially friendly and fine promises from either little birds or from big men and women; though also they are often resolutions that lead to inconveniences and to worse, if persisted in too conscientiously.

Now these seventeen small birds—by the by, I cannot tell you just to what bird-species they originally belonged, and the less because now-a-days they are even more detached from the rest of all bird-tribes than of old—these seventeen small birds were migrating sociably southward, one autumn, from some country-side, far up in the German Northland; when they made a halt in a lonely valley of the indigo-green Schwarzwald. It was a pretty spot; but the tiny village in it was poor, most of its humble people had not youth nor health nor beauty to gladden any human lives there.

It happened that the seventeen small birds arrived on a warm, bright Corpus Christi Day*. All the folk in the hamlet would take part in the procession in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a great day for those simple souls. So the seventeen

* Germ. — "Friedenstag," the annual public procession of the parishes, carrying the Host. In various countries, and especially in certain cities of continental Europe, it is an occasion of great pomp and dignity.

little birds, of course carefully avoiding all other bird-society in the place, perched themselves comfortably in a line, on a clean old pent-house, to watch the pious demonstration.

To tell truth, it was but a shabby—one might say a grotesque—procession, that those poor Schwarzwald villagers at any time could offer to the Blessed Sacrament; but especially such was their case in that year. For the winter had been unusually hard. Suffering and disease and death had been hanging about the place. Its aged priest was infirm; he had a paralytic malady that made his wrinkled face twitch pitifully. The two acolytes beside him, orphans and twins, were ugly lads. The village-shoemaker, who carried a pole of the dingy canopy above the Host, had a letter on his cheek; while another bearer, the ditcher "Hagerer Georg" was over-tall, ridiculous of person, and wore breeches patched like a bedquilt. Behind the canopy hobbled sundry old people, many of them feeble and solemn-faced, two of them humpbacked. There were loutish men and ungraceful, clumsy, toil-worn women of middle years. Even the few school-children showed no charm such as one expects in youthful faces. The vestments of the old priest were faded; the monstrance he carried was tarnished and tawdry. It was indeed a marvellously simple, unattractive devotion, that poor and straggling file.

Seeing all these things, the seventeen little birds soon became scornful and angry enough; for they had stayed their journey past early morning, just for the dull incident going on before them. They felt much aggrieved. Forgetting anything of pious intent,

they soon laughed at people and at procession, loudly chattering to each other their sarcasms. They mocked the poor villagers, they tittered at such attempts to honour faith, when so poor and ugly are those who believe. Above all, one bird, hopping up and down the ridge-pole and clattering his wicked little beak, openly caricatured the tottering old priest of the paralysed face, while his fellows-birds laughed. Some of them even tried, in turn, to be as disgracefully amusing mimics.

The procession passed and disappeared in the church.

"Come, come!" exclaimed several of the birds angrily, "Let us be off! Think! We have wasted half our morning to see this shabby show!"... "Such dirty, clumsy, ugly folk! Ugh!"

"Yes indeed! Besides, if we do not get early over to the old mill at the back of the Schneeberg, that I told you about, the miller's black cat and her six kittens will be prowling around the loft—we shall not be able to filch our luncheon without some danger. Come!"

So away flew the troop, still mocking and jeering at what they had seen. That is to say, they all flew off, except one bird. It was the same bird that most had mocked the priest and his humble assistants. Quite in love with such wicked mimicry, there on the pent-house was lingering that bird—the seventeenth bird; still hopping about on one leg and snapping its bill, expecting to overtake the other birds presently in their flight, and to make them laugh much more.

But all at once a great, stern Voice filled the air, all about the little bird:

"What art thou doing, oh, little bird?" asked the Great Voice.

It was the Lord God's voice! From the lowest Heaven, He was leaning out, to speak to the bird.

"What art thou doing? And what hast thou been doing, oh little bird?" repeated the Lord God angrily.

"Nothing, nothing, Lord God! Nothing whatever!" tremblingly answered the seventeenth bird. With sudden fear it had become motionless as a bit of stone.

"That is a lie!" returned the Lord God. "Have I not been watching thee? What have they meant, those curious motions of thine?"

"Nothing, nothing at all, O, Lord God!" faltered the bird.

"Liar!" spoke the Lord God again, yet more angrily. "For do I not know well? Thou hast been mocking my Sacrament! Thou hast been making sport and scorn of my poor and humble folk here! Mimicking the deformities and the feeblenesses that I have suffered them to feel. Finding mirth in those misfortunes of body and mind that I have even sent to them—to bring them nearer and sooner to Me.... Oh, wicked, wicked little bird! And not only thou, but thy fellows with thee! Where are they? All the others? For though thou art alone here now, there were many of ye, but awhile ago—even seventeen! Where are thy sixteen companions?"

The little seventeenth bird was nearly frightened to death. But it remembered its promise to stand by all that its fellows had done at any time, and

to do what it could to protect them, in all circumstances. So it was not even daunted by the Lord God in his Heaven. It replied :

"If you please Lord God, I have been all the time quite alone here."

"Again thou liest ! Thou art one little bird out of seventeen ! What did the sixteen ? And where are they now, oh, Seventeenth Bird ?" thundered the Lord God.

"They—they were here," replied the seventeenth bird reluctantly. "But—" it went on audaciously, "but gracious Lord God, we have none of us done anything save to sit here quietly, till the sacred procession should pass. As for myself, just now, why, I was merely hopping about, for stretching my wings a bit, and for saying my prayers more distinctly."

Then the Lord God was extremely angry.

"Accursed little bird !—that blasphemeth and lieth ! That still will seek to defend its lies, and its like ! So be it ! To thee then will I fix the punishment for thyself and thine absent friends ! Upon thee and them shall it fall alike. Henceforward and forever, all seventeen of ye shall have common dull feathers, and claws like other birds ; instead of golden plumage and silver feet ! Ye and all your descendants after ye ! Also henceforth and forever, instead of song, each and all of ye seventeen shall be able to utter only one single word—the word "Siebzehn ! *—that one, swift German word ! where-soever ye may be ! Ye and all your descendants

* "Siebzehn"—the German numeral "Seventeen."

after ye! Yes—"The Seventeen-Bird"—"Der Siebzehn Vogel," be thou and thy kind called forever, by young and old in the wide earth; so that whosoever hears your voice in the forest shall fear Me the better, and shall honour one of my religions the more, and shall be more kindly-hearted to my old, my poor, my unlovely in my wide world! Moreover so shall ye teach mankind to beware of setting too much store by what any friends are and do; and to be afraid of trying too well to protect one's associates in evil ways and in naughty deeds. Remember that, oh, cursèd little Siebzehn-Vogel! And let also all men and women remember it ever—through thee and thine!"

Then the Lord God was silent; and clouds came over His sun and sky for all that day.

The terrified little seventeenth bird opened its beak, to implore the Lord God's pardon. But the bird found that indeed it could utter but the one word—"Siebzehn!"—"Siebzehn!"—"Siebzehn!"—over and over. In grief and shame, it flew slowly away from the village, a dull little bird as to feathers and legs; for indeed all its rare plumage was lost to it. It caught up with the sixteen other birds, at the far-away mill. Lo, they too were transformed and motionless. The miller's black cat and her six kittens could easily have caught them. But the miller's black cat with her six kittens sat off to one side of the mill, all in a row, with their tails to the birds. They would not so much as look at the impious visitors, for they knew already what had occurred. As for eating such wicked birds, why, the miller's cat and kittens would liefer have lunched

on toadstools ! The sixteen birds all looked sadly at their latest-arrived mate. They tried to ask questions ; but each one could only chirp discordantly, "Siebsehn ! Siebzehn ! Siebzehn ! " ... So do all their descendants chirp to-day.

And that is why you and I can hear in the forests, on still afternoons, whether in Germany or Italy or what other country—(why, only the other day, far up on a mountain side, at little Cutigliano, that gray townlet in the emerald mountains of the North Appennines, I listened to the exclamation!)—a plaintive, shy little bird, which over and over calls out to us just one word, from some thicket or well-leaved tree, where it shuns the glare of day. Yes, over and over, it exclaims, in tragic contrition—"Siebsehn ! Siebzehn ! Siebzehn ! " And as long as shall be birds in the world, we can expect to overhear that regretful memorial of the unwisdom of irreverence to humble people and to humble faith ; of the mistake of trying to tell falsehoods, even for friendship's sake ; and of the danger—if by promises or not—of sticking too close to other people's secrets !



(TO LADY RITCHIE)

THE RING.

Lecturer: Mrs. Rebecca Chudleigh, housekeeper, aged seventy.

Place: The housekeeper's parlour at Yewstone Hall.

Time: After tea, on a rainy June evening.

MANY a year ago, my dear Miss Eloise—so many years! In spite of them all, I don't find one grows readier of telling such a tale, or you'd have heard this one sooner. Will the doctor let you sit with me long enough? It's dull for you in the library, till your papa—and Somebody Else—come back from town.

Well then, to run through it! Maybe your papa will have said sometime to you, that not long before I came here (you being not quite six then, dear Miss Eloise) I had lived a good bit of time with General Pitt Gervis, at his place, Stormerwood—in Sussex. The Gervis family had been very kind to my poor husband and to me during Chudleigh's illness, and in my great grief and worry about how I was to get on. I went to Stormerwood as a help to Mrs. Dawe, the housekeeper. General Gervis was a remarkably fine old gentleman—you don't see too many such, I often think. He was just turned of sixty-

one; but a very handsome man still, with splendid health, a deal of presence, and as elegant manners as any I've ever noticed. Not unkind-tempered, but regularly military; set in his ways, and with a particular notion of being always the head of his household. Outside of the servants, it was a small one. The General and Miss Gervis, his daughter, were all of it that were left, to keep up name and establishment. For that, rather like you and your papa here as to the outlook, till last Easter when you and Somebody—you'll excuse my freedom Miss Eloise? You've spoiled me.

I must say they did the keeping-up nicely. Plenty of house-parties—oh, a deal of high company—and the races and the hunting in the seasons, and so on. A ball at Stormerwood was a sight, I can tell you that, Miss Eloise! I've seen three duchesses and as many countesses, at one small winter-dance there!

As for Miss Gervis—well, my dear, I wish I'd any kind of a picture of her to show you. But I haven't. All the likenesses I'd kept of her so long were burnt here, when the South Wing took fire on your father's birthday—it's now near a dozen years back. But just fancy, if you can, a face that somehow always reminded me of a spring flower; a pale, very clear outline, and with the gravest pair of gray eyes that ever I've looked into yet. Such a fine, firm little mouth!—and a slightness and grace about her throat and shape to make you think of the waving stem that holds the flower up to the sun... But there! No describing will ever make you see what my memory sees.

Miss Beatrice Gervis was to marry a second-cousin, just come back on leave, from service in the East. He was the Honourable Vincent Bligh. He'd been engaged to Miss Gervis since her finishing lessons. The Honourable Vincent Bligh was some twelve years older than our young lady, though he hardly looked the difference. Mr. Bligh was about the last of his family, too. To be plain, I think the matter was particularly one of money and family—nothing else in it was quite as clear to me. Miss Beatrice never criticised it; not to me, that is to say; which of course, would have been presuming in me to think of. But I guessed.

Matches, my dear Miss, don't often come about in such a business-like kind of way, to call it that, without a soreness of heart somewhere—sooner or later. The first that I found out how such a thing was part of the arrangements for Miss Beatrice's marriage happened one evening. Miss Beatrice and her father and Mr. Bligh—he'd come quite early over to the hall, to dine—shut themselves up in the library, for an hour or so, talking most particularly. It was a meeting to settle different arrangements about the wedding, including the date, and so on. Miss Beatrice spoke of it to me, just a word or so, when she came upstairs. Mr. Bligh was to take some new government-post in foreign parts, a fortnight after the marriage; his bride going away with him of course.

A good while after the house had got settled for the night, I was sitting in my room fussing over the servants' tea-bill for the month. Mrs. Dawe was away, on leave to visit a son. I sat there at

my cyphering—very late. A smart shower came up.

"Rain?" thinks I, "Yes—and I've left that window down from the top, in Miss Beatrice's sitting-room! Like as not she'll never even have seen it, and is abed."

So I went upstairs to her suite. I opened the sitting-room door, making no noise, and didn't light a candle lest I'd disturb Miss Beatrice. I closed the window softly, looking out into the rainy night a moment. I was coming out, when I heard a sound from Miss Beatrice's bedroom; something like sobs, it seemed to me. The bedroom was dimly lighted—less dark than the room I stood in.

"Surely that can't be Miss Beatrice!" said I to myself. But then I heard the sound again.

"Miss Beatrice it is! But—but—mercy me! she must be crying in her sleep!" So thought I, much surprised, for Miss Beatrice was a specially quiet sleeper. I walked to the threshold of her bedroom. The door was ajar, a thick curtain across it.

"Miss Beatrice?" said I gently. No answer. So I spoke again, very softly, for I'd no wish to startle her as she slept. Still no answer. Then I ventured in farther. I was just a bit frightened, you may be sure. I drew back the bed-drapery. There lay my dear young lady. She was sleeping indeed. But I found—it terrified me—that she had likely taken some sort of a drug to make her sleep! My eye caught the chemist's envelope, on the bed! She did not stir as I stood by her. Tears were on her cheeks, as she slept. I could see them, even by the shaded light; they came gliding down beneath her eye-lashes. And then she gave that kind of half-

sob again, as I watched her. Along the white counterpane was stretched her arm. Some letters lay on the night-table. A draught had blown out one candle. The other let me see in Miss Beatrice's hand, a photograph—the photograph of a young man.

I couldn't well have helped seeing it, the photograph, if I'd tried. I recognised it at once, for I'd just noticed it before now, quite among her other photographs—not specially. It was the likeness of a Mr. Esmé Aspen. He was a young gentleman who had been attending to some alterations in the house all one autumn, before this year. Mr. Aspen was off somewhere in Canada. General Gervis had taken an uncommon liking to Mr. Aspen; and the liking had continued to the end of the young gentleman's stay—one made longer by some rebuilding of the village-church, a matter conducted by General Gervis and Miss Beatrice at their expense—a memorial of her brothers.

Mr. Aspen was very well-connected; the son of an old Oxford friend of the General, many years dead. He had gone in for a profession, having need to do so; and he was getting on well, for an architect in a firm, at only five-and-twenty. The General, in spite of his rather short ways, was much of a man of taste—had read learned books—thought a great deal of architecture. So Mr. Aspen and he had much in common.

You can fancy, Miss Eloise, what I felt in that minute, as I saw what I saw, looking down at my unhappy young Miss Beatrice. For dear, dear! Who could have suspected such a state of affairs as that? Not I! Not General Gervis either. Surely

not Mr. Bligh! Oh, I was absolutely certain of that! It all quite took away my breath! Standing there at Miss Beatrice's bed, I didn't dare to move again, for fear I'd waken her. Better let her sorrow in her dreams than suspect that their secret was shared against her wish. I didn't dare even to touch anything beside her—she'd likely have suspected me next day. I was nervous about leaving the candle burning. So what to do? I slipped away. But I shut the door a bit hard, as I went out, to rouse Miss Beatrice somewhat, if might be.

"So young Aspen stayed too long in this house!" said I to myself, when I was back in my room. "And to think that till now I've never even thought of *that*!... Mr. Aspen, you are as fine a young man as I'd wish to see. But I'd be glad enough now if you hadn't set foot in Stormerwood, and hadn't sung so many duets with our Miss Beatrice, in that beautiful voice of yours, and never'd read aloud those books of poetry to her and the General, of long evenings! Oh, dear me, dear me! it's a sad pity!... And now that I think of it, that is why Miss Beatrice has not been herself, for spirits, since November, just when young Aspen went. Miss Beatrice had said 'twas the cold she caught at her birthday-dinner."

No matter what may be a cold-sickness or what may be a love-sickness—worse yet, no matter how kindly General Gervis might feel towards young Aspen—I knew one could as well expect the Stormerwood House to move to the back of the park, as to fancy the General would consider for a second breaking off with Mr. Bligh, to take Mr. Aspen for

son-in-law ! It wasn't simply that young Aspen was hardly of a family of any consequence, he being quite a self-made young man, as they ; say nor that he had no money. He was delicate. Indeed he'd often been ill, when at Stormerwood. The General had particular ideas as to the future of his the Gervis name and properties, especially since his two sons had died of a fever—lads in school. Besides that Bligh match had been the talk of the county, for years. Mr. Bligh certainly would not willingly give it over. He was a proud lover ; but, in his way, he was a real lover, I think ; loved Miss Beatrice, maybe more then than earlier, or than he showed.

Miss Beatrice looked as usual, next morning. She was at least as cheerful as she had been during some months back. I felt a little guilty when she talked with me of trifling matters during the day. Mr. Bligh came over from his place. He was making large repairs, and re-furnishing. They rode together all that afternoon. I imagine the exercise brightened her heart a little. Mr. Bligh, I must say, always made himself fully as agreeable to her as so formal a man could do. I remember well how her colour was brightened up, how sweetly she smiled that very same evening, when I met her at sundown, in the upper gallery, after Mr. Bligh had gone—to be absent some time, in London and Paris.

"We dine a quarter-hour late, Miss Beatrice," said I, "your father has asked that gentleman and lady to stop. They've all gone over to the Ridge."

The gentleman and his wife were old friends of General Gervis and Miss Beatrice—a Captain Quorn and Mrs. Quorn, a-going around the world in a yacht.

Dinner came. Max, our second man, told me what went on. When coffee was brought after it, they happened to be speaking of curious relics in houses—of remembrance of people that have passed along—queer family-fancies, and so on.

"I wear one of ours," says Captain Quorn, laughing a little, and holding up his finger. "Or at least here is one that—of any Quorns—I am the most concerned with, at present.

"Ah?" says the General putting on his eyeglasses. "And what's that? Oh, a ring, eh? Well, Quorn, what of the ring?"

"First, look at it," answers Captain Quorn handing it to the General. It was a curious ring; for my taste not at all a beautiful ornament. I saw it closer afterward. It was a heavyish gold ring, with a round, onyx-like mount—seeming a stone quite black. There were some foreign letters cut in the stone. An odd enough ring, if you like, but ugly.

"Yes what about it, Captain Quorn?" inquired Miss Beatrice.

"That ring," the Captain went on—"that ring was given to my father when he was in Trebizond, quite a young man then, by an arab—[I forget what the Captain called him; but anyway Miss Beatrice told me 'twas a person of rank] in making up a quarrel they'd had about a commercial affair; the loss of part of a caravan-load, I think. The two men became perfectly good friends again. The Arab—or perhaps he was another of those Eastern foreigners—told my grandfather that this ring could change its colour; and that it never would change it without meaning something or other quite evil to him,

or to some person dear to him; or evil to any lenders or wearers and after him, to whom it might pass; provided their welfare was of consequence to the person who should give it. I understand the cutting on it states as much, in some kind of a short rhyme."

"Interesting," remarked General Gervis, "Interesting—mysterious—decidedly Oriental. And have you found what he said to be true, Quorn? That's even more interesting to know."

"Oh, about just that point, I'm sorry not to give you something romantic—after such a beginning. But the fact is that my father kept it carefully all his life, and nothing whatever disagreeable ever occurred to him or to his—that is to say nothing to speak of as connected with the arab rhyme on the old ring. The ring apparently has never changed colour a bit. It's as black to-day as ever it was, I'm sure. My father however, seldom or never wore it—I don't know why not; but, I expect, merely for the practical reason that he never liked jewellery, or else that this ring did not not fit. After my father's death, I found the ring in a box with a memorandum, setting down what I've told you. Last month I was looking at the ring, and I slipped it on my finger. It has been there, now off now on, ever since. I rather like it—it's queer and ugly, and certainly mysterious, as you say."

"It's not so very ugly. And let me say, most distinctly, that Captain Quorn's wearing it is quite contrary to my wishes." So spoke up Mrs. Quorn. "In fact I've told Oscar that I firmly object to such a ring's existing, to say nothing of its being worn by my own husband! It's a horrid, nasty, uncanny, kind

of thing, I think! And I believe there is ill-luck about it, however long the ill-luck takes in coming! There! And I'm not at all one of your superstitious women!—even if you think me so."

The General and the Captain laughed. Miss Beatrice examined the ring more curiously.

"Well, I'm going to put it away again to-night," said Captain Quorn. "I'm an obedient husband—sometimes."

"Would you be willing to permit me to wear it awhile, Captain Quorn?" asked Miss Beatrice, turning the ring over and over, in her palm. "I don't like to hear a quaint thing like that slandered. Suppose I make a test of it for you? My welfare is something to you, surely, as a friend. May I borrow the ring?"

"With pleasure, Miss Beatrice," Captain Quorn answered. "But really do you expect that arab giver and it will suddenly turn out true prophets? I hope not!" The Captain laughed.

"Beatrice, Beatrice!" cried Mrs. Quorn. "Don't you have anything to do with that ring! I protest! Oscar, don't you dare let the child put that thing on her hand! General Gervis! Please command your daughter."

General Gervis said something or other—quite lightly—against her wearing it. There was some good-natured disputing—so Max said. But the end of it was that Miss Beatrice borrowed the ring, with the plan to wear it for six months; also making a promise (she laughed as she made it) that she would faithfully report to the Quorns any sign of change in the stone, and of whatever followed. She

took the company as witness to her promise. The Quorns went back to town by the late train. They were to leave England next day at noon, on their trip.

That night Miss Beatrice's maid happened to be ill. So at bedtime, I went to Miss Beatrice, to brush her hair, as I liked to do. It was then that she told me about the ring, and showed it to me. While I was brushing away, and Miss Beatrice chatting now and then, I found that the post generally sent up after dinner was still below. I went for it. There were three or four letters. I took them to Miss Beatrice. I was busy about a comb I couldn't find in her toilette-matters. Then I heard Miss Beatrice give a little cry. I sprang up. Back fell her head. She was in as dead a faint as could be. I was able to recover her without making any stir at all upstairs. But oh dear! she lay quivering and sometimes moaning in her bed, for hours afterwards. There had come a letter from Mr. Esmé Aspen's mother. Mr. Aspen had died, suddenly, of some kind of a quick fever, in Canada. The last words he'd said to his mother had been to tell her all about Miss Beatrice. He'd begged his mother to write. She'd done so, poor lady!—from Montreal, and addressing straight to Stormerwood, instead of to the next post-office!—where Aspen's letters, not many nor often, because of distance, had been sent to my poor young lady!

That was a night! I shall never forget it to my dying day, Miss Eloise, never! It was one long agony of grief for Miss Beatrice; one hour after another of heart's distress! And I was the more upset because I had never conceived of such passion in her from her, as possible—never, never!

Once or twice I feared for her reason. There was little one could say or do... But Miss Beatrice had strength under all her weakness. She felt she *must* control herself, she must be in hand, before morning. That she knew! So she replied to that letter from Mrs. Aspen that same night. No effort at keeping her secret from me now. From the time of that dreadful shock, she knew she had me as her confidante; and she made me feel that she was glad of it, in spite of the great difference in our stations in life. Alas, she'd nobody else, poor child! But a very useless and unhappy confidante I felt myself, Miss Eloise!

I could scarcely believe her strength equal to what I saw her do next morning. She came down to breakfast wonderfully composed; and—of all trials!—she was equal to listening to General Gervis reading the notice of young Aspen's death from a newspaper! She could take part calmly in some conversation about it. General Gervis was really a good deal shocked. He spoke of young Aspen as "a fine young man, with manners very superior to his station—uncommonly engaging"—or something like that—said that "the boy's death could not fail to be a sad loss to his mother" "Mrs. Aspen also was of quite hopelessly delicate constitution." And so on—I heard various details from Max.

Mr. Bligh came over at luncheon. He was obliged to go to town for some days. Miss Beatrice excused herself from seeing him.

That afternoon I noticed her lying on her couch. She held up something small and shining; Captain

Quorn's black oriental ring.

"See there, Mrs. Chudleigh—the ring! It did not warn me," she said, handing it to me, with a queer little smile. "Either I haven't worn it long enough, or I'm not much in Captain Quorn's kind heart. Or else the ring has lost its magical properties."

It seemed to me that the ring coming to her scarcely an hour (so to say) before that bad news was enough for its uncanny kind of character. I said so, as well as that I'd be glad to lock it up in my own bureau for her, at once; though mind you, dear Miss Eloise, I'm not much given to heeding idle superstitions, I never was so. However, I admit I felt dislike to that ugly ring; the more because now it would carry with it such a sad thought for Miss Beatrice.

"Do shut it away immediately, Miss Beatrice!" I urged.

"No," said she, "no, Mrs. Chudleigh! It's a terribly interesting ring to me now. I shall ask Captain Quorn to give it to me for my very own, when I see him. If it isn't a prophet to me, it shall be a sad, sad remembrance. Besides—I've heard of rings, more or less like this." Now, unluckily I paid no great heed to those last words. Miss Beatrice had read curious books of Eastern travel, and so on. But I remember I wondered a little why she had not said to Captain Quorn that she had read of such ornaments.

Well, Miss Eloise, her self-control was a surprise to me! There were no more tears, that I could know of, after that week. And I did Miss Beatrice injustice in my thoughts. For—finding her, day by day, so composed—I just said to myself, "It's

only a finish of a girl's romance after all ! Certainly this sad ending to it is well for Mr. Bligh, and—perhaps—for herself. The sorrow'll pass soon !”

As to General Gervis and Mr. Bligh suspecting anything, why, Mr. Bligh had to stop just then for several weeks in Brussels ; and the General had not good eyes for mysteries, even where Miss Beatrice was concerned. What was more, just then he'd other cares—a big lawsuit going wrong.

But afterward, oh, oh, I understood Miss Beatrice better ! She played a hard part dreadfully well—poor girl ! How I wronged her ! She'd buried Mr. Aspen in her heart. So not a word again of him, not a sign to speak of ! Even before me, she made an effort. I was very busy with my share of the earlier wedding-preparations ; I didn't once stop to look beneath the machine-like manner (as I know it) in which Miss Beatrice lived through those days, in which she was surely thinking, every moment she could give him, of her dead lover. She must have often waked when I thought she slept ; her heart must have been breaking when I believed it mending ! She must have hoped for death when I fancied she was looking at least a bit resignedly toward life, as Mrs. Bligh ! I never so much as hinted—it was not for me to do that—at a grief that she hadn't been able to keep from me. I thought that either she'd made up her mind to live without any sympathy at all, not even mine ; or else she took mine for granted. I'm sure I hoped so ! And I prayed God for her, poor child !—often—so often !

One afternoon, some four weeks it must have been, after the Quorns were at dinner, Mr. Bligh

came back from abroad, and was at the house—again to luncheon. He'd brought a decorator from town, that morning. Miss Beatrice and I were unpacking some new Paris clothes just forwarded. We were in the gallery. While Miss Beatrice was busy over the boxes, Mr. Bligh remarked the ring. Miss Beatrice told him Captain Quorn's story. Nothing else of course about the ornament.

Mr. Bligh took it and gave an exclamation. "Really!" said he—with a sort of cross-grained little laugh he had sometimes—"Captain Quorn's grandfather's friend, or whoever else gave the ring such a character, is quite right! I've seen these rings. Change its colour and warn one of danger? I should say so! But something ought, first of all, to warn people of danger if they wear such a trinket. Captain Quorn's wise ring is an Eastern poisoning! Not more nor less! And the idea of your wearing such a thing, Beatrice! Awful! Look here."

Mr. Bligh set his knife-blade very delicately to the ring's setting and opened it. Instead of a stone, there was only a rounded little plate of glass, or crystal, nearly clear. The inscription, whatever it said, was cut on the glass. Underneath that glass lay a little lump of hard stuff, perfectly black, like jet, a lump that fitted as exactly as possible. But it was a powder, hardened into a sort of oblong lozenge, stuck on the flat of the ring. And that powder it was gave the ring its black colour—nothing else. I say 'powder' now, though I didn't understand it for such till later.

Which of us two seemed more surprised, Miss Beatrice or myself, I don't know. Still—well—af-

terward I thought—but no matter now about that.

"You see? It's change of colour would mean danger enough, I dare say!" Mr. Bligh went on. "When such stuff as that isn't shut up safely in its place there, making your ring look as if it was mounted with a stone, why, of course then there is a chance of its doing decidedly nasty mischief—so long as human hands and mouths are about. It's full of poison! Probably a violent poison. Ugh!... My dear Beatrice, don't fuss with it so!" he went on. "Lock it up for pity's sake! You surely wouldn't care to carry about with you such a horrid piece of Eastern trickery. A most oriental kind of peace-present—with a vengeance! See, see!—the setting has four tiny little holes in each edge!... Suppose you should once drop it accidentally into your soup or in your coffee!—not noticing! The stuff is surely made to dissolve quickly, no matter how hard it is if dry. Good God!—I wish I dared destroy it."

But the more Mr. Bligh said, the more Miss Beatrice seemed bent on wearing the wretched thing.

"All that you say only makes it more interesting," she said. "Certainly there aren't many such very wicked rings in England. That gives it distinction. I think I like it!"

Then Mr. Bligh tried to induce her to let him take the poison out of the ring; if she would persist in wearing it.

"Most surely not! Do that without asking Captain Quorn's consent? Quite impossible! Perhaps he'd never forgive me. Besides, I like to think of it as it is. And I shall wear it exactly as it is."

I soon found that neither Mr. Bligh nor General

Gervis could induce Miss Beatrice to lay by the ring for an hour. One evening, she frightened them terribly, pretending to have let the ring fall into her claret! Another time she gave *me* a real turn; persisting in pressing down the gold setting, holding it directly against her teeth! Mr. Bligh had said again that he hadn't the least doubt that the poison was the swiftest sort one could fancy.

Mr. Bligh's business was finished in course of ten days. Whatever had to be done in the house, before the wedding was well in hand, too, six weeks ahead. All the place was upset, day by day, with work-people—gas-men, carpenters, carpet-makers, upholsterers and so on.

It was then I began to notice Miss Beatrice's strange manner. Sometimes it appeared to me she was only a clock-work, in those days. She seemed busy as to everything needful for her notice, you'd say. She got up in the mornings and went to bed at night—she talked and ate and drank—all quite as usual, you'd say. But, for all that... She never smiled, when alone with me. She used to sit a great deal, of an afternoon, down by the old stone sundial, in the French garden, with an Italian book, or another with a name something like "Khyam" or "Khayan" on the cover—poetry I think. But I saw that she never turned a page— not one!

She spoke less and less with me, and I remarked how restless she acted, as those last weeks went on. She appeared so dull and nervous one evening (fairly owning to me, for once, that "she'd not slept at all the night before"—also confessing to feeling ill) that I asked leave to have

a cot placed in the room adjoining hers. For myself, I was very tired that night. I most surely wanted to be company for her ; but I slept as sound as one could, for the first few hours. I woke up in the small ones, hearing sounds. Miss Beatrice was moving about her room, pacing back and forth. She had closed my door, not to rouse me. So I—well, it's not nice to confess it, Miss Eloise, and I've not often acted so, you may be sure!—but I went and put my ear to the door. She was not crying, while she was walking about ; but she was speaking to herself. One thing she said several times over—"I must have courage—more courage! Beatrice, have courage!... Don't be afraid." Well—I was frightened enough at such doings! So I knocked on the door. Then I walked in to her. There was no light in her room, except the moon. She was standing in the oriel. I went up to her—I took her hands. She started at seeing me.

"Dear Miss Beatrice," said I (I can't give you my exact words, I wasn't so blunt) "—dear Miss Beatrice, you'll not be angry at my freedom? I feel you're in sore trouble. If this matter of your marriage is making you unlike yourself and ill in this way—oh, do, do tell your dear father!... Surely it can be postponed awhile. You know General Gervis'll do much for you, where there is real danger or trouble to you. Better, far better, tell him everything! Yes, better to tell quite everything—than to have such nights and days as these!... And perhaps only deeper sorrows are to come! Get your papa to take you abroad again. Mr. Bligh will be kind—reasonable. Oh, surely he will be so!"

She looked at me as if she could see through me! I can see her eyes now, just as they shone in the moonlight, while she stood there before me, in her white peignoir. She answered me quite calmly—"No, no, I do not wish to put the wedding off, Mrs. Chudleigh. Indeed I am not ill. This restlessness is nothing. I know it must be for only awhile. It will soon pass. I am very sorry I have disturbed you with it. As to—Mr. Aspen—well, I would not speak of him to my father on any account. What would be the use? Besides, even if it were not too late now—death ending it all—well, you don't know my father as well as I do."

"Perhaps not. But Miss Beatrice," I urged, "surely Mr. Bligh is a man who can understand a woman's feelings. Also—don't you think you owe it to Mr. Bligh to help him to understand yours? You're to be his wedded wife. Mr. Bligh—"

"Mrs. Chudleigh," answered she, speaking a trifle more sharply to me than ever before. "Mrs. Chudleigh, Mr. Bligh is quite the last person in the world to be given so much as a hint of—of my thoughts or feelings. *That* you must remember, please. When I am Mr. Bligh's wife he shall have all a wife's needful confidences... And now you must just go back to your bed.—I'm going to mine." She gave me her hand—cold enough hand it was! On it I felt Captain Quorn's ring; for she wore it even at night. I made my excuses—she took them sweetly. "Oh, I look on you as a friend, Mrs. Chudleigh. You've spoken and been heard as such."

Days passed. I was not allowed to sleep as near Miss Beatrice again. She managed it so. I

used to wake up and wonder if she were awake. But I never could hear signs of that, even when I slipped upstairs and listened outside her door.

It was on the first day of October that we received the earliest of the guests who expected to stop with us for the wedding—two of the bridesmaids. Other friends followed, by ones and twos. The wedding-dresses were put on, for approval. Miss Beatrice was perfectly quiet again, often cheerful, I thought. But Lady Agnes More remarked to me once how dreadfully tired Miss Beatrice looked. I could say nothing. That same afternoon, Ann Billett came to my room. Ann said "something pretty bad was going on" down in the library, between Miss Beatrice and the General. Ann had been shut up in the music-room, at work. She'd overheard General Gervis speaking very sternly to Miss Beatrice. "And," said Ann Billett to me, "I quite know it has had something to do with that young Mr. Aspen who was here last season." Ann heard the General ask Miss Gervis very angrily, 'If she'd any idea of what had given reason for such tattle?' Miss Beatrice answered 'Whatever was the tattle she was not the person to give him information on the matter—she was very sorry he'd mentioned it to her...' Just then Ann Billett found she must hurry out of the music-room, or else meet some of the company. So she came up to me, by a back-stair out of the conservatory.

You can imagine how troubled I felt.

Miss Beatrice spent the afternoon with the young ladies, in her rooms. I could not even get a glimpse of her. She looked uncommonly bright at dinner-

time, when I met her in the upper hall. There was to be a little carpet-dance after dinner. She wore a lovely new gown of lavender, and she'd pinned a passion-flower in her bosom. I noticed too a beautiful bouquet of black pansies she carried; also that she'd put on one of her handsomest neck-jewels. But on her hand, along with her betrothal-ring was that other—Captain Quorn's black ring.

"You're looking very handsome to night, Miss Beatrice," said I, stopping her, to pin back her scarf.

"Am I, Mrs. Chudleigh?" she asked with a quick smile, "I'm glad of that. I feel stronger to-night than I have felt myself for weeks—luckily when I most need to be strong, considering what's ahead."

"Yes," said I, "the house fills up fast." For I thought she referred to the company.

Everyone spoke of her spirits at that dance; also of how beautiful she looked. Mr. Bligh (as I heard—for he was a sort who seldom spoke what he felt) couldn't but remark to her about it, in his ceremonious way. Mr. Bligh never's been a very clear sort of man in my memory, Miss Eloise. Perhaps I'm unjust to him; but he reminded me of the saying about a velvet glove over an iron hand. However, let him go now for whatever he was. That same night when the dancing was over, Miss Beatrice came upstairs with the ladies following her, all saying their good-nights to the gentlemen standing below in the hall, and waving their fans and handkerchiefs, and singing a popular song. I was on the landing of the second staircase. Miss Beatrice got to the turn of the stairs. She was looking back, with Lady Agnes More. She stopped. She threw out her hand-

kerchief, clear over all the heads following behind her; and she called to the General, "Papa! Papa! That's to remember me by! To remember me by! Good-night."

Mr. Bligh picked up the handkerchief. "No!" Miss Beatrice called out, leaning far over the balusters—"no, Vincent! You cannot keep that! Give it to papa!... There isn't any money in it! Not even a farthing." Mr. Bligh smiled, and passed the handkerchief to General Gervis. I thought at the time that Mr. Bligh might not much like that last little speech—not even from her. It was quite well known that she'd bring him a very large fortune; though I don't suppose he needed it—his money-affairs were not in bad order at all, according to report.

Presently the maid came to me—"Miss Beatrice desired me to come to her apartments." So I went to her. First, she had some questions about house-affairs for me. Then—"Mrs. Chudleigh," said she—she spoke as if tired, though she wasn't looking at all fagged and worn out, as so often before—"Mrs. Chudleigh, I know you've been troubled about me lately. I've appreciated it... I want to say to you that to-night I feel better, calmer—more like myself—more as I used to be—than in months. I'm not worried about—about—my future. It will be all well enough.... To-night I've felt equal to doing more than in many a week. My head is clear again, at last; all the thickness out of it. I'm certain I shall begin to-night to sleep well again."

"I'm delighted to hear it, Miss Beatrice," I answered. "Really you do appear a bit different from the way you've looked lately—I can say that.

Such cheeks!... Why, dear me!—if 'twas anyone but you, Miss, I'd think some of that color of yours to-night was rouge! I hope you'll have as many rose-leaves in your face next Saturday noon, at the church."

She looked at me without speaking, for an instant. Then she said in a pleasant tone, smiling a very little, "So you had rather neither I nor the black ring changed color? Very well—speaking for myself, I'll try not to lose my roses. Good-night."

Oh, Miss Eloise! After I got upstairs to my own room that night, it was *I* that did not sleep well! I had miserable dreams. Not until daylight did I get a little wink of rest. The sun woke me out of that little; for I'd left my blinds open, by mistake. I looked at the clock. It wasn't yet five. But presently I got up and dressed. All alone as I was at that hour, I concluded I would go on with the packing, in Miss Beatrice's rooms. So I went upstairs and entered very softly.

As I tiptoed into the boudoir, you can imagine how surprised I was to find Miss Beatrice already up—dressed. She'd put on one of her white cashmere-wrappers. She was sitting across the room, right in front of an open window. Her back was toward me, as I crossed the threshold. The first sunshine of the morning was streaming round her figure—a most lovely day begun.

"Miss Beatrice!" I exclaimed, making ready to open a trunk by the door, "Up so early! Dear me, Miss! What became of your good night's rest you promised me? I lost mine too, I must say!" Then I went up behind her—just a step or so. "Miss

Beatrice!" said I.

No answer from her. Then I sprang forward. I caught hold of her arm. I looked down at her face—

Oh God! Dear Miss Eloise, I think I see now what I saw then!... I wish I could not have it once in my thoughts the rest of my life! Her countenance—well, there was that same brilliant rose-color, just two round patches, along her cheeks—rouge! But all the rest of her face—oh, it was just yellow!—a strong, bright yellow, like a kid glove, or the yolk of an egg! Her eyes were fixed, sightless; and the whites of the eyes were as yellow as a marigold! Her lips, except where she'd reddened them, were a bright, sulphur-yellow. Her hands were yellow—the very nails on her fingers were all yellow!... She was perfectly cold—I suppose she had been dead for hours; had sat there through the most of night—alone—dead!... On the floor—seemingly thrown there—'twas at some distance—I saw her engagement-ring. Upon the table lay Captain Quorn's ring. The setting was opened. The glass or crystal was clear. Not a trace of the black powder under it, in the hollow place!... Broken pieces of a goblet that had held water, lay at her feet. So quickly as that had the drug acted—she had not been able to set down the goblet! There were some ashes in the grate. Her hand was soiled with them—the ashes of Mr. Aspen's likeness and letters, I have always believed, for there was neither picture nor letter among her things when, we put everything away. But to say why she died so, not a sign to anyone!—except what was meant to me by those ashes and Captain

Quorn's ring.

Of the rest of that awful day—that hurried end of all preparations for the wedding, I needn't tell you. Most people believed in an accident for Miss Beatrice. I said nothing... Never shall I forget such a week! She was buried in the park. General Gervis left England immediately. He died abroad, very soon. Mr. Bligh went to Rio Janeiro. I heard he married there, some dozen years ago. I think he's alive still—I don't know.

Well—that's all, Miss Eloise... And the rain's quite past—look, there's bright sun!... I see Clarkson's bringing your horse around... Pray go and take a brisk ride, to get such a sad story out of your head... Ah, ah!—as I've often said—I wish that I could get it out of mine! But I never shall do that, I know; unless death's going to mean our forgetting quite everything good or bad, that's happened about us in our lives down here!



(TO MISS RACHEL T. BARRINGTON)

HIDESATO.*

ONCE upon a time, far down at the lower end of the great Lake of Omi, which surges about in a huge cavity torn out of the earth by the soil and rocks needed to uplift Fuji-jama—the Matchless Snowy Mountain!—there lived a splendid and terrible young knight named Hidesato. How shall anybody begin to tell of his exploits with lance and sword and bow? Only a few of such deeds were Hidesato's killing of monstrous beasts sorely plaguing that region of Japan; such as a tiger which stood so high on his hind-legs that he bit the pinnacle clean off from a temple's roof!—also the annihilation of a black bear that cast stones as large as an ox at the villagers, with his fore-feet. Hidesato rescued from robbers numberless distressed ladies of rank;

* The name and doings of young Hidesato, the Siegfried-type of Japanese legend, will be new to many Western readers, but he is the chief figure in romances by authors of his own people; in innumerable picturesque and heroic deeds the central and ever-triumphant personage. By countless generations of Nipponese, Hidesato is adored as a kind of Robin Hood, St. George, King Arthur, Hercules, Dick Turpin and Amadis de Gaul, all fused together. I will not undertake however to locate any part of the following tale in one or another official chronicle of the hero.

E. P. S.

drove away pirates from sunny seas ; routed out tyrannical usurpers from castles where they did not belong ; and otherwise swung his huge two-handed sword in favour of the virtuous and oppressed, right and left. Moreover he was young, beautiful and good when one hears most about him. So let us fancy he stayed so—all three—everlastingly !

But all the monsters of those remote days were not wholly evil-hearted. There was a certain tolerably peaceful and aged dragon thereabouts, with scales of solid silver and an excellent heart. In fact, though he was feared by many, he was also generally respected. Unluckily he was grievously pestered by a mighty centipede, a centipede of a kind never seen before or since, more dreadful than any other centipede or other manner of creature that ever has lived—a centipede-wizard withal ! The amiable dragon dwelt in the Lake of Omi ; his name was Suki. The evil centipede lived in a rocky lair, hollowed in the Matchless Snowy Mountain. He was called Jen.

One day Hidesato was riding along beside Lake Omi. As he did so, up rose the dragon, Suki—a frightful object to behold. Looking angrily at Hidesato, Suki roared out loudly :

“ Hé, hé, Sir Hidesato ! Dare you hurt me ? ”

But Hidesato was not in the least alarmed by the dragon Suki's conduct. Though hearing plainly the words called, and guessing a little what might be meant beneath them, he rode past, paying no heed to the call.

The next day Hidesato came riding by the lake again, but not so much as looking at it. As before, up

rose the dragon Suki and clamored out more savagely than before.

"Hé, hé, Sir Hidesato! Dare you help me?"

But Hidesato once more trotted by, deigning no answer. For Hidesato wished the dragon Suki to know that should he, Sir Hidesato, pause to listen, it would not be a halt through fear.

The third day, as Hidesato came near the blue waves of Omi, the mighty Suki once more accosted him:

"Hé, hé, Sir Hidesato! Will you hurt me or help me? For you can do both." This time the dragon Suki did not say "dare."

Then said Hidesato: "O Suki, I will hurt you if need be, or I will help you if need be—perhaps. For I dare all! But, first, what matter desire you of me?"

Then the dragon Suki told his tale: "The centipede Jen robs me. He seeks to slay me. He swears that he will have my heart! Kill the centipede Jen, Lord Hidesato! For you only can kill Jen! Against you his magic is foolishness!"

"O Suki, what will you give me for fighting Jen?" asked Hidesato.

"Thanks from my heart that you save for me, and fire from my eyes, and clay and water from my lake. For, lo, I have no more to give!"

"So be it," replied Hidesato. "It is a bargain! Where then is the lair of the centipede Jen?"

So Suki told him the path, and Hidesato set out on it. And, first, the path went up the mountain after so steep a manner that the tail of Hidesato's horse hung down as though it had been a carpenter's

plumb. But next moment the path went down so sharply that Hidesato's helmet-plume made a track in the dust. Also, deep in the valley, the path wound and twisted about so suddenly that thirteen and one-half times Hidesato was on both sides of that path at the same moment! Before long, he came to a red road, with blue trees on either side. Farther up the mountain, he came to a red road, with scarlet trees; as also with yellow waterstreams flowing swiftly up-hill! Presently he arrived at a narrow road, with walls of solid black marble that at once closed tight behind him and his horse. With that began low thunder. The air grew exceedingly dark. The fierce lightning in front was Sir Hidesato's only guide. Therewith a great voice called out:

"Back, Hidesato! Go back!"

But Hidesato replied stoutly, "No, I will not go back! For I have given my word to the dragon Suki to find and to kill the centipede Jen!"

At once did Hidesato find the path in that black defile growing lighter; the storm had disappeared. But lo, he was now walking, not riding; for his horse had been spirited away by Jen's magic!... Soon Hidesato was before a great archway. While he paused and looked up, again came a still more threatening voice, straight from the cavern that opened before him.

"Back, Hidesato, back!—or it is death to you! For it is to Jen that you are drawing near!"

"Rubbish! Verily I will not go back!" replied Hidesato. "Have I not given my word to the dragon Suki, precisely to find Jen and to kill him?"

So the knight entered boldly the archway of the cavern. And as he set his foot within it, he heard a vast bell strike five awful strokes slowly, as from a bell in the depths of earth. On Hidesato walked; until he found himself in a huge, underground palace, the sides whereof were lined with green jadestone, and of a ceiling so high over him that there were clouds in it. On all sides were strange and dreadful pictures, and statues of appalling monsters that could move their eyes and mouths and limbs with fury against Hidesato; though he saw no guards of Jen that were more alive than they. Also a terrible roaring, like a stormy wind, filled Hidesato's ears each moment, albeit the air before and behind him was without motion. Yet so calm was Hidesato, as he passed along, that he felt amused, and with his spear in the air he traced the patterns the clouds took as they floated. In this way he walked tranquilly through seven halls and through seven courts, unmolested.

After that manner he came at last to two great closed doors. Behind those doors lived the centipede Jen. On one door was Jen's huge visiting-card, held fast by gold pegs; on the other door, hung one of Jen's enormous claws, broken off in fight — a warning to strangers not to trouble him. But Hidesato kicked open both doors at once, with one foot, and marched in; bending a strong arrow on his bow which ten ordinary warriors could not string.

Now the room which he entered was so large that it was full two miles to its further end! Yet the centipede Jen was so huge that Hidesato could see him from the door; sitting comfortably at

a table, eating a vast dish of rice; for Jen trusted to his magic. And Jen had still left four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine bronze claws; in all but five hundred he held torches to light his supper, and with the five hundred he fed himself. But now Jen perceived how foolishly he had put faith in his enchantments to protect him from Hidesato. Jen saw Hidesato afar, staring at him—Jen was panic-stricken! Z-t-t-t! Hidesato's arrow sped across the two miles, as though they had been but a yard! It knocked the rice-dish out of Jen's claws, it pierced Jen's Wicked heart, Jen fell down dead, and every torch went out!

Then Hidesato plundered Jen's cave and store-houses. He brought forth great treasures of jewels and money, also all the things that the abominable Jen had robbed from the venerated dragon Suki. Next, Hidesato cut off neatly all Jen's four thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine bronze claws, tied them into a string together, and put them carefully into his pack. Then Hidesato quitted the magical cavern. He came down the Matchless Snowy Mountain far more easily than he had ascended it, being no more hindered by Jen's enchantments. In a certain place, too, did he find his horse, safe and sound, awaiting him. And so came Sir Hidesato to Suki.

Great, great, was the joy of the excellent dragon Suki at the tale of Hidesato's adventures. Suki danced a dragon-dance, and sang a jocund dragon-song of triumph that lasted three entire days and nights. (So comes it that we still say of people greatly pleased about something, that "they are

as joyful as the dragon Suki.") And Hidesato squatted beside the Lake, to behold Suki's delight, during all those three days and three nights; so agreeable to Hidesato was the pleasure of Suki at the death of Jen! And after Suki had ended dancing and singing, Suki asked:

"When will you receive the reward I promised, Sir Hidesato? Moreover how much besides it must I borrow to content you?"

"All I wish," replied the knight, "is what you pledged me—fire from your eyes, O Suki, and clay and water from your Lake Omi."

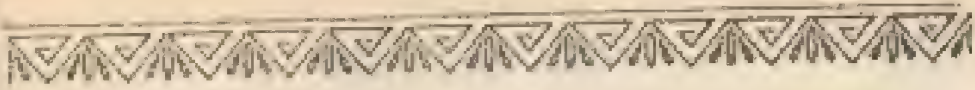
"So shall it be!" returned Suki, much relieved. "I would gladly give more; but verily the hero is known by his high-minded moderation."

Then Hidesato took the clay and the water from the Omi Lake, and of them he made bricks. And fire from the eyes of Suki baked those bricks as never were bricks baked in a kiln, before or since! And Hidesato got together a mighty mass of wood and coals and sand, and melted into a great bell the many bronze claws of the centipede Jen. Then Hidesato built a temple of the bricks. He hung the bell of bronze in it; and the tone of the bell was as solemn and far-reaching as had been the tone of that mysterious bell, heard in the cavern of Jen. Also Hidesato named the shrine—"The Temple of Hidesato, the Centipede-Killer." The dragon Suki watched over the temple until he died, having left all his great treasures to it.

Such was the adventure of Hidesato with the venerable dragon Suki and the terrific centipede Jen. Do you ask—"Can one to-day go to Japan, even to

the Lake Omi, to see Hidesato's brick temple, and to hear its deep bell?" Surely one can go to Japan, also to Lake Omi, if desirous to see temple and to hear bell. Yes! This story merits to be true. Besides, I know a lady, lately traveling in Japan, having seen the Matchless Snowy Mountain, also the Lake of Omi. And that temple? And she has heard that bell? More or less.

As for Hidesato, the temple built, the bell hung, he rode away on other equally admirable and strange adventures. But they are not for our improvement just now.



(TO CHARLES HOLMAN-BLACK)

THE SANGUINE

[During the afternoon we had seen in a portfolio the drawing in question—a small, graceful sanguine, evidently only half-finished, the delicate reds of its chalk seeming as fresh as when the hand tracing the sketch had interrupted it. Sitting that night at his great dining-table, in Sunday Hall, old Sir Ruel Semple told this story—which is true.]

“... FIRST of all, however, you must not think of my great-great-uncle, Owain Everest, as the wrinkled diplomat that quarrelled so notoriously with Lord Melbourne. That portrait up yonder shows him at the time I am speaking of, when only about twenty-four, and known around Rome as “Il Piu Bello dei Quattro.” Which means that Rome’s society counted Owain Everest the handsomest of not less than four young Englishmen at the Embassy, each of them notable for good looks. That Everest had some pretensions to such a pre-eminence, his likeness is certainly tolerable evidence. He was, too, by all accounts a fine, manly, high-bred fellow fond of life and alert, but with a curiously sedate vein in his psychic anatomy; a good deal of a student—

a linguist—a great reader. He was also more than a little of a poet. Another time I'll show you some of his verses. He could draw with cleverness, was musical and had ambitions of intellectual success in more than one path."

"One spring, the Honourable Owain needed a surgical operation. It was of a kind troublesome and even dangerous in those days—something amiss with a disordered leg. The affair was got through in Rome, duly and well; but after it, Everest required some rest and quiet, with more or less of a change of air. He would not, or could not, come back to England—I forget exactly why not. So during his convalescence in Rome complicated the question of whither he should best beat a retreat for the summer."

" 'I'll tell you what you are to do, my dear sir,' said the old Marchesa Trisa, a life-long friend of Owain Everest's dead mother. 'You have heard me talk of my antique rural establishment, the Villa Capriolo, up near Como. I am not going there at all this summer, I'm sorry to say. You know about that happy incident expected in my married daughter's house. We are full of anxiety. I must be at Vienna, from July to September, at least. But do you just pack your boxes as soon as you can, and post comfortably along up to the Villa. Install yourself there, just as you'd do at home; make it useful to you, sick or well, as long as you need it. There are only two or three servants, but they include my good old Marcantò and Purificazione his wife. They will look after you as if you were a saint—or myself. You cannot do better—

your doctors say so, I've talked it all over with them. You'll do vastly well in my retreat. In October, very likely I'll join you. Then we can come trundling back to Rome together, my dear boy. What do you think of it?"

"Owain Everest thought very well of it indeed, and was properly grateful and pleased, you may be sure. So the offer was accepted, with pleasure on both sides."

"One thing I must mention as a possible drawback," said the Marchesa. "—that is to say, you will probably find yourself without society in the house—save of those old servants—and my cross persian cat, Hafiz—as far as I know. The place is a good deal detached. There's a convent off to one side of my park. Another very old villa, nearer, over to the left, is practically quite unoccupied—at least so while I've been stopping at my establishment. It belongs, I think, to the Archbishop of Modena; who never sets foot in it. So you must find society, if you can, when you feel in better form for that and desire it; or get along without it, first and last."

"To this aspect, my great-great-uncle returned that to be without social interests of any sort was exactly what was *à propos* of his state of health and inclinations. The medical men had instructed him not even to walk about much, during at least a month; to avoid any fatigues by talking or what else; to go to bed with the chickens; and generally to live quite to himself until he should be recovered definitely from his illness—or surgery. Besides which Everest wished much to study a mass of curious,

old diplomatic documents in his care. They would consume a deal of time, during his *villeggiatura*."

"So up to Como went the Honourable Owain Everest, that May. All sorts of kind little preparations had been made for the young man's reception by the small staff of the Marchesa's servants at the Villa Capriolo. Everest was enchanted by the ancient but cheerful house, with its lovely, simply-kept garden and *bosco*, its peace and quiet and unbrageous freedom. The journey, by carriage in those days, had tired him considerably. He was glad to be absolutely stationary—passing much of his time in a chaise-longue on a loggia. So, well-fed and indefatigably served by the silent Marcantò and Purificazione, Owain thrived at the Villa Capriolo, like a stately young hermit in lay-clothes."

"As the Marchesa Trisa had said, his environment seemed practically minus any neighbours. The remote convent was represented by an impenetrable wall, sundry tree-tops, and a bell ringing canonically. On the other side, the near villa, known as 'Casa V—,' and mentioned as belonging to the Archbishop of Modena, showed no sign of life. Everest supposed the place quite uninhabited. He used to study idly the vague contours of its loggia and terraces, visible from his sofa, as one inspects a picture devoid of human interest; till one evening came the surprise of discovery. The house suddenly had achieved occupants! Thenceforward, during idle days, Owain Everest found himself interested in some unexpected neighbours in "Casa V—."

"They were two ladies, seemingly mother and daughter. They appeared, by those hundred and

one little hints that are caught even at a distance, to be women of distinction as to person and position. They wore only black or white. Each lady—the elder was perhaps forty, the daughter not more than twenty—was of marked beauty and elegance. They had only two servants with them—a man and an elderly woman. The ladies appeared to be Italian, though of that matter Everest could not be certain. They lived in extremest retirement. A short morning-stroll, certain hours on the loggia nearest Everest's observatory—some time at a book or embroidery, or conversing calmly—a late afternoon or twilight promenade,—usually awhile in the garden—a day for the two strangers reduced itself externally to that strict time-table. By ten o'clock there was never a light in their premises; though on some evenings, when the moon was fine, Everest saw the two again, walking in stately solitude up and down their long loggia, like two shadowy *revenantes* from the Renaissance."

"One little matter, which immediately caught the Honourable Owain's notice with a pathetic appeal, was that the younger lady—the daughter, as he decided her to be—evidently had not the full use of her right eye, temporarily or permanently. A bandage, of dark or light silk, invariably covered it carefully, leaving the left eye free. The young lady seemed also to avoid all stress of sight, during a situation that Everest took to be rather similar to his own—recovery from some sort of surgery, and needing sacrifice of activities. She did no reading and but little embroidery; though she listened with evident interest to her companion's books, and

consulted wools and patterns with her. In walking she made frequent use of her companion's arm and guidance, to some extent."

"It may as well be confessed that my invalid great-great-uncle was not above using—discreetly—that old-fashioned lorgnette which you see in the cabinet yonder—a strong little glass. He had not needed it however to appreciate that the young lady was of great beauty in type—an aristocrat to the ends of her taper fingers. The older woman was not less striking in the harmony and the fineness of her features and carriage."

"At last Everest's romantic interest was enough alert to make him practically inquisitive. He called the reticent Marcantò to aid. As would be expected, Marcantò and Purificazione, despite what they characterized as an abysmal coldness to gossip of the offices next door, were by no means without some data of the newcomers suddenly appearing on the horizon of the Villa Capriolo; surprising to its domestics, as well as lazily interesting to my great-great-uncle."

"The two strange ladies were a widowed aunt and an orphan niece—so they were not mother and daughter. They were connections of the Archbishop of Modena; Sicilians from a small rural estate near—perhaps—Cefalù. 'Signore distintissime—coltissime!'—affirmed Marcantò,—'molto istruite e garbatissime! Di una famiglia illustrissima!... Ma sono povere—non mica ricche!... The niece had been troubled with a malady of the left eye, after an illness, ever since her early youth. She was obliged to be sparing of the use of the sound, and certainly

beautiful, organ of vision that was uninjured. The ladies had been invited by their ecclesiastical kinsman to pass this summer in his unused premises on the Lake, with the aim of benefiting the aunt, who was delicate. Hence they were there. They had no local acquaintances; plainly they sought none. Their servants had come with them. In fact their situation was considerably like that of my great-great-uncle, Everest."

"Now despite Everest's desultory interest, I am not sure that he would have taken an initiative toward intruding his acquaintance on the two interesting ladies, who evidently desired to be let alone. But a chance, awhile after Everest could walk about the park of the Villa Capriolo—the angry importunity of two drunken beggars who invaded Casa V—, one afternoon—brought the ladies and Owain into mutual acquaintance. After perceptible hesitancy on their part, especially shown by the young lady, to encourage anything like intimacy, it grew to be such, in a fortnight or more; and it was pleasant if reserved. The situation of all parties favoured it. Everest's fine breeding, frankness, tact, accomplishments and good looks set aside the evident unwillingness of the fair Sicilians (whom I will call Signora and Signorina Qualà) to make even a sort of summer-friend of their English neighbour. The three became excellent company."

"As may be imagined, more and more was presently laid by the formal conventionality of companionship between Everest and the shy young Signorina Qualà. In fact, as the aunt—the only near relative—explained, the sensitiveness of Signorina

Qualà as to her eye-trouble—to being obliged to wear a bandage to protect the weakened right eye from strong light—was the main source of her avoidance of such simple society as their position allowed, in Sicily or elsewhere. There was unluckily not much expectation that full vision would ever be restored to the young lady. An accident in her cradle had afflicted her from infancy upward, despite much care to correct the muscular disorder; including recent particular efforts."

"But never should such mischance have been less thought of—especially by a stranger coming to know that lovely girl! Her beauty was exquisite—that of a cameo. Her eye that had not been injured was of melting expression. Her smile was a dream, so perfect were the lips and teeth. Her rich hair was worthy of Guido. Her figure was gracious as one in a gallery of statuary. With that exterior, also one felt her sweetness of character, her patience in a rather straightened life, as well as in an afflicted life. Like her aunt, she was carefully educated, accomplished, of fine mind and vivid temperament. She sang with taste. Also as the three chance-acquaintances grew quite at ease with each other, by Everest's little visits—that now were daily—with walks in the garden of Casa V—, and reading aloud and so on, Signorina Qualà became far less morbid. She and the young Englishman had much lively pleasantry together—to the aunt's cordial satisfaction. The ladies made a charming group, to Everest's eyes. He received permission to make a drawing of the two—and so began that sanguine which I showed you this afternoon.

"But you must not suppose too promptly that love-currents are part of this little history. At least none such developed on the side of my young great-great-uncle. His affections were already fully engaged to Lady Sybella Kitchover—whom he married. As to the exact shades of Signorina Qualà's sentiment for Everest?—well, I admit I am not so sure. The situation seems perilous for the total composure of the heart of a girl so situated. Perhaps, too, the aunt hoped that something sentimentally advantageous might come of matters. I cannot say. The Honourable Everest's memorandum expressly disclaims all interest beyond a mutual friendliness. In any case, so went sundry weeks."

"One afternoon, Everest strolled over to Casa V—, for continuing his drawing, to find that the older lady could not give him a sitting. She had been unwell—was abed. As also chanced, both servants had received leave to go to Como, to execute some legal document. But Signorina Clelia was ready and disposed. She seemed in unusual spirits—the soft, hesitant vivacity that, as I have said, had recently shown her improved psychic attitude toward life. Everest surmised that the aunt would have preferred to respect conventions by postponing his work; but Signorina Qualà evidently had gently overcome such scruples. Everest, in undertaking the sketch, had adjusted the pose and drapery in a manner to put almost out of remark the silken shield across his sitter's lovely brow—as you may now recall. The drawing proceeded merrily in the quiet loggia."

"But slowly the air and light changed. A series of distant thunder-storms drew near. Soon the

tempest came, and it was unqualifiedly violent. Fierce lightnings, crashing thunders surrounded Casa V—and the two young people. Presently there were heard great boughs and branches cracking in a furious wind. The lake was a gray whirlpool, scarcely visible in darkness deepening each moment. Signorina Qualà grew increasingly agitated. She and Everest at last took shelter within the great *salone*, out of which the *loggia* opened. The young lady made a trembling visit to her aunt's sick room, in a distant wing of the house, and came back to sink into a chair not far from Everest, saying that the invalid's headache made her almost oblivious to the terrific storm. Everest would not venture out into the deluge. The climax of its fury swept around them like a tornado."

"Suddenly a bolt of lightning struck close to Casa V—, with an appalling crash. Then came another near bolt! But worse, a second or so later, as Everest and the trembling, pallid Clelia Qualà looked out toward the *loggia*, they saw a huge ball of clear electric fire gliding gently through the air. It moved in horizontal line of their vision; fortunately not toward them, but obliquely—rather in the direction of the corner of the house, around the *loggia*. Still, it was terrifyingly dangerous—life or death perhaps balancing, according to path and the least air-current. Owain Everest uttered a stifled cry of terror. Clelia Qualà shrieked. Ghastly white, tottering, she started up—caught at a curtain—then stumbling she fell to the marble floor, in absolute unconsciousness, overcome by a paroxysm of fear."

"Owain sprang to sustain her. The girl lay

prostrate. In her fall, the bandage had slipped from her forehead. At the same time, her gown of thin black silk had caught somehow on the adjustment of the curtains, with a violence that had torn it almost wholly from her bust and shoulders. Owain looked down at her. Then he too called out something, he knew not what, in a hideous surprise of discovery.

For—Signorina Qualà had no injured nor uninjured left eye!

Where that left eye should have been was merely the smooth, white skin of her forehead, undisturbed from birth—and from before. But that missing left eye was seen just above the middle curve of Signorina Qualà's fair, round left breast! And—then—then—while Owain Everest was trying to collect his senses from the shock of such a discovery, that same misplaced left eye—an eye perfect in every detail, even to its long silken lashes—slowly opened—as did the right eye alone in the forehead! And both those eyes looked up at Owain in a vague, returning consciousness; in an unspeakable regard—the discovered and defenceless misery of awful deformity. ”

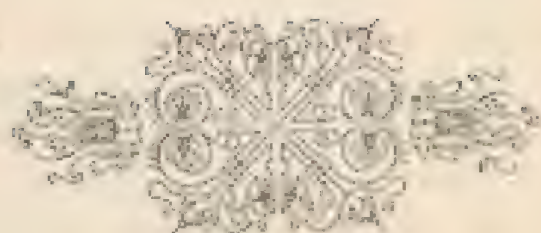
“ My great-great uncle rushed from the room. Despite rain and whirlwind, he fled to his own abode, every nerve shaking with horror at the disclosure. He understood now the bandage, the ever-retired life, the nervous sensitiveness of the lovely young woman, the solitudes of the aunt—all that physical and social tragedy. The memory made his heart stand still with compassion and repulsion! ”

“ He never saw either of the ladies again. Vainly

on the next day, and later, Everest tried to resume the intimacy as if nothing had happened, as if he had seen nothing amiss; indeed he hoped profoundly that the unhappy Clelia Qualà might not realize the disclosure. Everest managed with much tact his effort at ignorance. But his subterfuge was quite useless. A letter from the aunt begged, though with a thousand regrets, that Everest kindly would "make no further effort to continue the summer's acquaintance".... "the suggestion of a visit distressed Signorina Qualà out of measure"—though neither in her case, nor in that of the elder lady, was intimated any anger or blame for "an unspeakably regrettable accident," as to which strict confidentiality was implored. During several days, Signorina Qualà was described by the servants as 'very ill.' Aunt and niece were not visible in their former out-of-door haunts. In the course of a fortnight they had gone away, to some unknown spot.

"Everest, in fully recruited health, went back to Rome, in October, with the Marchesa Trisi. But the Marchesa was never informed of that incident at Como; it must have quite failed knowledge of anybody in touch with her, save the absolutely reticent Owain. All the same, the direful peculiarity of Signorina Qualà was known to at least a few persons in Sicilian or other circles, at the time or later; including some distinguished British travellers in Italy, such as Samuel Rogers, the Shelleys, Lord Byron and Leigh Hunt. But we cannot find that my great-great-uncle disclosed it, or alluded to it, save once. In a letter, dated many years later, to George Bubb Doddington, Everest gives the account

substantially as I have told it to you now. The letter was found among Doddington's effects, after his death. It was sent to my grandfather—I have it to-day, laid away among his private papers."





(TO MRS. EDWIN L. REYNOLDS)

MADAME CLERC.

"Au revoir, mamma. Take a good nap, until I come back."

Laure set her hat at a better angle, and finished buttoning her gloves. She gave an affectionate look at the bed, on which withered little Madame Clerc was extended, motionless. Then she hurried out to the landing of the staircase, and so down. Laure was a dancer at a small theatre, over on one of the outer boulevards. There was an afternoon-performance of "*Prince Colibri*," for which incident a prolonged rummaging of certain boxes of costumes had made Laure a trifle late; she had no time to lose. Once down in the street, she walked briskly up the narrow alley—for it was little more—and presently scrambled into an omnibus. Laure Clerc was what a parisian calls, with a special and creditable meaning, "*a good girl*;" indeed a better daughter than she was dancer. Private life, from her financial point of view, could not include cab-hire on ordinary occasions of haste.

For an hour after Laure's departure from the tall, quiet house, little Madame Clerc still lay curled up in bed, with eyes half-shut; but not sleeping. Perhaps she had heard Laure's adieux, per-

haps not. There was almost no expression on the old woman's wrinkled face; a face prematurely so aged; for though she was scarcely past sixty, Madame Clerc looked seventy-five. A bowed, shrunken little frame, a pallid, shrivelled skin, bony and feeble arms that lay outside of the coverlet, a pair of thin hands that feebly traced the pattern of bedquilt or of wall-paper, in course of the long and somnolent days—scanty and straggling white hairs escaping under a dingy bed-cap usually askew on the querulous, osseous forehead—her head much declined over her left shoulder by a rheumatic contraction—such looked little old Madame Clerc; an anaemic and deformed old woman, ending here, in total obscurity, her too-long mortal life. Nevertheless, forty years earlier, this same old woman had been the famous *ballerine*, Joujou d'Orl — Joujou d'Or!

Could it be possible? Yes, Joujou d'Orl—surely! —if now a physical and mental wreck from sciatica, poverty, nervous collapses, and at least one cruel fillip of paralysis. Old age without beauty or any vestige of dignity; as is the old age of so many thousands of such women, thrown up to the publicity of a stage, sure to be cast to one side in brief time; the flotsam and jetsam of the *coulisses*. That was Madame Clerc now!... When she could dance no more, even in the poorest theatres, she had tried to teach dancing. When she was too unfit in body and mind to teach, she would have starved, for all that the Paris of her day remembered her or would help her, reckoning from managers of theatres to those rich men of the clubs who had been her admirers when she was young and

to be admired. A benevolent society had accepted her slender savings—she being of a sort that spend much but save little. It had failed. The street was before her—or some public refuge of the aged and penniless. But Laure, her one child—a child not wholly wise, since it certainly did not know its own father—was growing up, of the theater and in the theater, like her mother. As Madame Clerc sunk into helplessness, apathy, dotage and dreams, little by little, Laure became the bread-winner. Laure somehow kept a roof over their heads. "No, she shall not go to any asylum!" said Laure angrily, to all those who urged her to relieve herself of a burden now heavy and gloomy; one that must keep on being heavier and gloomier, until some morning the daughter would find the invalid dead from senile inanition. "No, I say she shall not go to any asylum! So long as I have my legs, I will keep her and keep myself!... She is harmless, and she is my mother... How do I know what sort of treatment she would get—poor soul!—in an asylum? Besides, the doctor says she will not live long—not six months at this rate of her going down—down. Ah, she is so feeble!"

So reiterated Laure; with sharp admonitions to people to mind their own business, not hers.

And indeed Madame Clerc was becoming less and less alive every day now! Her intelligence was waxing incoherent her physical force vaguer. To lie there in her bed, with open eyes, studying the flies on the ceiling; to smile faintly as she was fed; to murmur, to doze to dream—such had become her normal, day-to-day existence.

But as Madame Clerc lay there in her bed this afternoon, whispering dialogues without any interlocutors—conversations with imaginary and dead personages—or else muttering to Laure, in spite of the fact that the girl was far away in the ballet at the theater—a significant thing happened. It was not remarkable that a passing hand-organ should play outside, in the little by-street in which the house stood. Hand-organs played there—often enough. Nor was it extraordinary that the instrument should sound out, in its noisiest rhythm, an old polka-tune; for the repertory of any hand-organ, all the world over, is a curious combination of the conservative and the novel. But it was an odd coincidence that just at the moment when this old polka set in for its mechanical course, waking with noisy melodiousness echoes of the retired quarter, that the kaleidoscopic particles, or atoms, or whatever else one may call them, in Madame Clerc's disordered memory were so adjusted that they caught at the tune; sprang to it with a violent consciousness that it was specially familiar. Quite all the vitality in the bedridden old woman's mind and body was electrified, in a way startling to see. That polka? That polka! Oh, oh, many and many a time Madame Clerc—when Joujou d'Or—had danced airily, athletically, incomparably to that very trifle by Musard! Had she not been famous, she and Elise Corail, for a super-wonderful *pas de deux*, to its music? A mere chance had set it on the cylinder of that barrel-organ. But a stranger chance had made it catch to-day, under those nervous conditions that can defy all scrutiny and systematizing by doctors, Ma-

Madame Clerc ears; as if galvanizing the crone whose life was ebbing away, in semi-paresis, on those spring afternoons, up in the top-storey of a half-occupied Paris tenement.

Madame Clerc's eyes were already wide-opened. Now they became wider and wider, as she listened. "One—two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four—
one—two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four—
one—two—*three*—four 1.." So went the organ briskly, in sharp tempo. "Aha, aha 1..." laughed Madame Clerc, sitting up in bed. "A brave air that I Hark, is it not so? A brave air!..." "One—two—*three*—four—
one—two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four—
one—two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four 1!"—continued the organ. Its aggressively rapid rhythm rose louder, in a nasal, jerking staccato, up to the shadowy room, under the half-opened windows. "One two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four——one two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four——one two—*three*—four"—and so on, phrase by phrase. Madame Clerc began talking rapidly. She was talking to Elise Corail. To be sure, Elise had poisoned herself, thirty years before, to avoid being publicly implicated in that ugly affair of Philibert de S—, the son of the Minister. But what mattered death? Madame Clerc talked to Elise Corail this afternoon; to nobody else.

"You lie, Elise! You lie, I say!" reiterated Madame Clerc, supporting her dishevelled person with her shrivelled arm, and looking now at the space in the middle of the room, now at the floor. "So much better to hold your tongue! Bon Dieu, qui vous écoute!—you've always lied!... Victor never said that he would pay for it!... Oho, ma petite bichette!—

don't I know? Jealousy, nothing else, ails you!... Don't deceive yourself... Oh, there! Keep to your own side of the room, please! I don't need your help to dress... What's that?... Really... Bah, my dear, you know you'd—you'd stick a hat-pin into my back—if you only dared... But it wouldn't do you any good; no, nor a knife to my heart—with him nor with that young *crétin*, his cousin!... Yes, I say *crétin*—be he duke or not!... And he must be *crétin* to look sheep's eyes at you, behind my back!..."

Madame Clerc cackled at this sally—and at some others swiftly following, less articulate and less decent. The organ continued. Whence did the old woman get that sudden re-enforcement of strength and energy? For now she drew herself fairly out of her bed. There, she sat, a hideous little human object in a dingy night-robe. So seated, she kept on talking away rapidly, in solitude—nodding her head in tempo with the silly polka departing further up the street. Her arms were folded, extended, gesticulating. She swayed her wasted body backward and forward, touching the faded rug with her foot. The yellow nails on that foot had once been rose-color.

"What is it *that* you say?... What? If I don't dress soon, I'll be late in going on to dance? M. Georges will fine me?... *What?* Upon my word! Repeat that! Yes, do, if you dare!... False pearls? Quite my affair, mademoiselle, not yours... Oh, I'd like to tear those little cat's eyes of yours out of your head!... *Your skin?* Do you call dirty copper-color 'a pretty brunette tint'?... *Figure?* ...Wh-a-a-t? My figure? Camel!—just look at *me!* Look at *me!*

Then say where *your* kind find any market to buy an arm like this? Or a bust like this?" And Madame Clerc made a gesture, hideous in its disclosures. " ... See here, you—you—mademoiselle la squelette! Suppose I should tell him that two of those front teeth of yours are false? Or how you lost half your hair, last February, when you took to using that poisonous *Baptême de Feu*? Ha—ha—ha! Don't, now *don't* look so angry!—sweetest, fairest, dearest! ... Stop, stop! Keep off there, I say, or I'll slice your hamstrings for you, canaille! ... "

Madame Clerc's voice was really shrill now. If there had been any attentive lodgers in the house, they easily might have heard the unwonted, hostile talk. But few people were in-doors at that-hour. Madame Clerc had ceased swaying. Bolt-upright on the bed's edge, she veritably menaced an imaginary foe. Her bony arms were upraised, her fingers hooked like little bird's claws. Her eyes were snapping and rolling, a light like manta in them. Then she took to laughing again—mirthlessly. Really, Laure should be at home! But Laure could not come for a good while yet. So there was nothing to interrupt the active influences of souvenirs that, only an hour ago, one would have said never again could be aroused in a brain so lethargic.

Old Madame Clerc in fact was to-day not unlike an ancient watch, or a quaint musical snuff-box, that has been lying in a drawer for years, stopped with some sort of an obstruction—a grain of sand, a mere mote—in its works. The obstruction suddenly falls out; with a jar, the old wheels begin again to run! The very disorganization which time has added to

their quietude sets them into swift revolution, until the whirring and clicking shall be over, the spring at last uncoiled or broken forever. Yes, an hour ago, that the old ballet-dancer could even stand upright again would have seemed incredible. She had looked and acted like a bit of frail anatomy, devoid of will. But now, still staring with glassy eyes at the imaginary Elise Corail, her attitude of defence unchanged, Madame Clerc gained vigor; for she stood up beside the tumbled bed. One hand leaned against the foot-board, aiding her equilibrium; but soon she showed that she did not need support. Her voice fell to a lower key. She ceased to scold the Corail, across the antipathy of forty years. She smiled, her yellowish lips parting over nearly toothless gums.

"Yes, yes—in a moment! In a very few moments!" She snapped it out, as if to some theater-official, turning her unclean and wrinkled neck a little more to the right. "I know I am trifle behind-hand—I will soon be ready."

Madame Clerc quitted the bed. Very slowly, she walked, with a walk that was half a stagger, that was half a pirouette, as far as the middle of the room. Pausing there, catching at the shaky table, she held fast by it, still staring at nothing visible; talking disconnectedly, unintelligibly; now and then rocking backward and forward. Her ropy greenish-gray hair had fallen down behind her cap. Stray locks dangled down her skeleton-like shoulders. Now and then she tapped the foot on which she did not rest her slight weight, in time with the nearly inaudible organ. "One—two—*three*—four— one—two—*three*—four— one—two—*three*—four—

one—two—*three*—four——one—two—*three*—four!..” So droned afar off the organ. The gypsy—of Montmartre egyptianity—who played the instrument was retiring to the boulevard, not having found so quiet a street profitable to the arts. But the gradual cessation of the music had no effect on the progress toward fantastic delirium in Madame Clerc’s head; a chaos now fairly under way. All at once, “Why—why—ha, there it is!”—she ejaculated, looking down at a big pasteboard box on the table.

In the box was a stage-costume that Laure had just received from a cleaner’s hands. The spangled pink tulle skirts and fleshings, folded together, would look fresh enough by gaslight, though now they seemed faded and lustreless. “Charming, charming!” muttered Madame Clerc, leaning over them. “Very charming indeed. Just as I ordered it! Charming!” She repeated the encomium several times more, in different tones; fingering the poor fabrics, leering down at them. Then abruptly she pushed the box down on the floor, with a light thump. Sitting down beside it, she began laying out its flimsy contents, with ecstatic, broken murmurs and foolish gestures; motions unpleasant to see. Finally, with much more nodding, chattering and admiration of her limbs and attitudes in the process, her bizarre design was fixed. Madame Clerc, ex-ballerina, proceeded to array herself for dancing!

“The color?... Yes, the color is quite well chosen. Perhaps an idea paler than I had preferred,” rambled along the now half-nude old woman; surveying herself curiously, with squintings and blinkings. “There is not life enough in the rose....

Still it will do... What's that you said, Léon? Oh, là, là—là, là! If you say such a pretty thing again as that, do you know what I shall do? I will kiss you... There! You deserved that, for once, my dear boy! He gave the Corail a barouche. Yes, I have seen it. At least I have seen *her*, and she speaks the truest truth always, Elise does. Doesn't she?... But he didn't give her any horses for the barouche! Ha, ha, ha!... Truth—truth to nature—that is the greatest thing, they say! May be so—as surely it is my nature to dance! And to love? To love! Oh, that depends. Not on you, dear Léon! My nature—my nature—”

And so muttering about her nature, and blinking admiringly at each outstretched and distorted limb, Madame Clerc completed her attiring. Once more she leaned against the centre-table, bowing and smiling at an invisible audience!

It was a hideous caricature of Terpsichore and of senile mortality that this dishevelled, half-clothed fragment of theater-life presented. Madame Clerc had huddled on the gaudy costume, with here a tape untied, there a button uncaught. It is hardly needful to say that her proportions to-day were miserably at fault with the fine *maillof* webbings. The stiff tulle skirts stuck out, or hung about her person, in utter disarray. The exercise of dragging on the garments, so far as she had donned them, had told on the delirious old woman's sudden accession of nervous force. She panted and gasped, rolling her eyes under their wrinkled lids, again bending now this way, now that. But she rallied—grinned—bowed—posed. And next, after a final attempt at the rigid immobility of figure that a danseuse appears to

maintain for a moment before she begins her steps, and with her lips parted in the puppet-like smile of the profession, Madame Clerc began to dance. To dance!

It would have been a great realist with his brush, and only a great realist, that could have painted such a ballet truthfully. That shabby room, with its bare floor and disordered furniture—the tumbled bed—the dim, gray afternoon-light filtering into the place, between faded mull curtains and drying-up flowers in mouldy pots; and there, in the middle of all, that white-haired, shrivelled old creature, scarcely like a woman, bedight with finery suited to the person of one long years her junior—herself nearly naked in spite of it—stumbling about, unable to place properly her swollen, venous, feeble feet; now humming to herself, now talking, now laughing!... It was a shocking caricature—a real Dance of Death!

Suddenly, in the midst of her steps and crooning and smiling, Madame Clerc stopped. Not from fatigue; for excitement and delusions had supplied her with artificial powers that might have prolonged her lunatic choreographies. She had abruptly come before the mirror, the only one of any size that Laure's apartments possessed, fastened on a door near the window. Madame Clerc stared into the mirror, gasping and gaping, in an unexpected shock of surprise.

"Good God! Who—who—are you?" she asked of the apparition, in a hollow, angry tone. Of course, there was no reply. Madame Clerc stepped nearer the tall glass, trembling at an image that

seemed, by quintessent frightfulness, to act with revulsive power on her fantasies.

"Are you—me?" she demanded, clutching at a chair and leaning forward. "*Me?* Joujou d'Or? No—stop! Quit staring at me that way, I say!... Away—you vile—hideous—deformed"—those quick words, and a string of others worse, poured in an incoherent blurr from her trembling lips, the saliva dropping out of them... Then... "Well, well, I know who you are! I am not you. But you are me! That's how it is... If that be so, do you know what I shall do with you? Especially as you'll be going about before I know it, telling everybody that you *are* me! For you'll try that trick. Surely you will!" Also especially since Elise will help! Especially as lots of people will believe you—and as it will be true? But I know what I shall do! I'll soon prevent *that*, you—creature!"

Would the angry old woman break the glass, in her crazy fury? Not so. Such a rational and simple device did not chance to enter her frenzied head. The mirror was not a mirror to her.

"I'll burn you up! I'll burn you up!" exclaimed Madame Clerc.

She drew back. Turning away, she looked hastily over her shoulder. Oh, yes — the image was still there, looking back angrily — mocking, irritating. So with a smile — such an awful smile, the last one destined to twist those shrunken lips — Madame Clerc made her way on tiptoe, till chattering, to the chimney-piece. She lighted a candle. Candle in her hand, she returned to the mirror.

"Look here! Look here!... Eh, eh, my pretty!"

Do you see that. Yes, yes, it's a candle! Fire—a nice little bit of fire. And for you, my pretty. To set you afire! Maybe to set me afire too—I don't care! Oh, I don't care... But you! Aha—a fine bonfire you'll make! You'll see! I know how to settle the case of anybody like you—quickly enough."

The smoke of the flaring candle held to the mirror was the only impression on it from her attempts at ignition of the gaudy skirts that she saw reflected.

Madame Clerc gave a cry—a cry that was like that of returned youth, of half-sane despair, of some sort of consciousness of to-day's identity bursting through disordered ideas.

"*I am you! I am you!*" she exclaimed, sinking her trembling voice to a whisper of fierce disgust, of hatred beyond any words; glaring into the mirror, brandishing the candle over her Megara-head—"So be it!... *I burn, whether you burn or not! I, if not you!*..."

She held the candle-flame to the skirts of tulle, crumpled out on either side of her tottering figure; her face distorted not only with rage but by a madness suddenly become absolute. With a flare, the fabric caught fiercely. Madame Clerc laughed savagely. Then she shrieked. So shrieking and laughing, already a whirl of flame, she spun, pirouetting and screaming, across the room. She fell—still laughing—dancing—against the draperies of the bed. An instant more, and it too had become a mass of fire, in the middle of which was something still living—blackening—writhing—shrieking... In a few moments all the room had caught, and the only sounds were those its woodwork made in spreading

the blaze ; till presently came loud cries of panic and warning, from inmates of the house or from street-passers. The upper stories of the dwelling burned like tinder; the firemen had trouble enough to save the rest of the dwelling and nearer domiciles. But Madame Clerc's life was the sole one lost; unless there would be truth in saying that Mademoiselle Joujou d'Or, psychically resurrected from the abyss of a far-away past, also had definitively concluded her existence, in an annihilating little double tragedy.



(TO MRS. ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON)

MRS. GALLUP ENTERTAINS A FRIEND AT TEA.

DON'T tell me you won't take no more bread, a'ready! Nor toast? Nor crackers, neither? Why, you ain't no eater at all, Miss Pingree! A hearty dinner? Yes—but law me! Dinner-time was full six hours ago. You've done all that blue cat-stitch on my new curtains since. Well, I won't urge you. 'Twas for all the world just the same with Mr. Gallup, durin' the most part o' his lifetime; he never cared a row o' pins what he et in the evenin' so long as he was real hearty at dinner in the middle o' the day. Let me fill your cup though—oh, come, I re'lly must insist on't. Janey, pass Miss Pingree the cake—not that side—the other, you heedless critter!—an' then hand me the gilt-edged preserve-plates. Miss Pingree, I do hope you'll excuse this quince. Gincerally I have good luck with my quince; but the heft o' this's taken to workin'—'tain't fit to eat I'm afraid—'t any rate I'm goin' to send it over to the orphan-asylum, next week. Janey, spoons.

Lemme see, where was I? Oh, you was mentionin' that Reverend Mr. Bascom was settled in the Memorial Church, over to Apron Creek. Is that a fact? Well, I wish 'em joy of him! And I'll tell you another thing I wish—an' that is that Apron

Creek ain't a very giddy kind of parish—for its sake an' Mr. Bascom's. Wha-a-at? Married, say? So soon? His third wife! Well, well, don't some ministers beat all on matrimony? His first wife was a Bealer—his second one was a widow from Philadelphia. But there'd been one or two other *candidates* before Josephine Bealer. Lemme see... There was Cora Staple—her with the cast in her eye, and that used to sing in our choir—one o' those deep, shakin', *graveyard* kind of seconds. Also there was Phenice Allowby—according to talk—Minot Allowby's queer daughter, the one that wrote pieces for the papers, Rachel Parrott, who married Ashbel Piper? Certainly, her too—but that was a long time earlier, perhaps fifteen years ago.

Rachel's been a wife for full a dozen or more—mebbe's many 's fourteen—o' those years, livin' over in New Leicester... Oh dear, yes, we was all dreadful worked up at the time, when seemed as if Rachel was really going' to marry the Reverend Mr. Bascom—marry him in spite of all her family an' her friends could do or say against it. Oh, you knew that? ...What? You don't mean nobody's ever told you *how* that affair ended? Why, certainly I know. It was that amusin' circumstance, over to the Synod at Baskerville, that cut short Mr. Bascom's match with Rachel Parrott's quick as a flash. 'Twas real funny, in the end, when I come to think about it; at least for us who was there. Never can help laughin,' when I call it to mind. That's right, help yourself to the angel-cake—I can recommend my angel-cake. With an old friend like you, Miss Pingree, I ain't ashamed at havin' only four kinds o' cake on the table. Do try a piece o' that "Napoleon's Glory"—its from

great-grandma Gallup's own receipt.

Ever see Mr. Bascom? No? Well, he's a good deal older now, of course. But I'll bet you a cooky he ain't much changed, extarnally or intarnally, from what he was when he came here, the summer o' the freset, to supply Parson Kittell's pulpit. Parson Kittell had the bronkeeters. Mr. Bascom was quite a young pastor then—not more'n twenty-six or seven. He'd been a preachin' over in Northwestern New York for a year. He was a terrible clever, conscientious, deep-thinkin' young man; powerful in the pulpit—and an unwearyin' worker. I must say all that for him. A very *good* man! Miss Pingree—a high sense of his duty and callin', and wantin' to leave no jit nor tottle of it undone.

But what distinguished Mr. Bascom immejitly to me, the first identical minute he come here, from all ministers, old or young, that ever I'd seen—an' it struck sooner or later everybody about here—was his *solemnness*! Yes, just that—his solemnness! Without exception, he was *the* solemnest man—no matter where he was, nor how he was, nor what he was doin', or sayin', or thinkin'—that I've ever encountered in the course o' my nateral life! Husband used to say "every day was a funeral o' Time, twenty-four hours long, to Mr. Bascom"; an' that he was "bent on enjoyin' every minute of the mournful ceremony!" Why he impressed us all so, I can't just say. 'Twasn't that he was always talkin' about sin, and sorrow, an' death, an' the welfare o' folkses' souls, an' the desolation o' the walls o' Jerusalem, an' the triffin' o' the perfessors, an' so on—though them was rather frequent topics. No—'twas more just the

looks, an' voice, an' manners o' that man ! Whatever Mr. Bascom was speakin' about—the blessins o' Providence, good crops, promisin' children, anythin'—'twas all in the same way. His long face, an' his deep voice, an' his dretful never-a-smile, never-a-laugh manner sometimes was re'lly unbearable ; used to git me so nervous I sometimes fel's if I couldn't set still. In the pulpit, it wasn't so amiss. There, 'twas well enough, specially as he was dignified—naterally. But say he'd come to a little tea-party of an evenin' ; first thing you'd know, all the young people'd have slipped off into another room, even if there weren't to be no lively games played. He performed the ceremony at the weddin' o' ' Lias Wells's daughter an' Franklin Bennett, over to Gambrelsborough. Folks there used to tell how, before he'd half done with his address to the young couple, he'd got bride an' groom, an' the fathers and mothers, an' lots o' the weddin' company, all a-sobbin' an' cryin'—Grandmother Wells into high hysteericks ! He gave out in the pulpit that he expected to call on the families o' the congregation as frequently as he could ; but that he would like it understood that at such visits, or " if invited to social visits, or any other kind," the conversation must be " exclusively on religious topics " — otherwise he must ask to be excused from comin' ! One evenin' he was walkin' slowly past Mis' Runkle's gate, when her little Kit run up an' ketcht holt o' his knees, laughin' and callin' out " Minister—how do, mister minister ! " Mis' Runkle—she was back o' her lilac-bushes—she told me that she saw Mr. Bascom pick the child up, an' kiss her, very grave,

for he was tender-hearted underneath, in spite o' his onmoveable face; an' holdin' the little thing—kind o' awk'ardly—he says, not so much to Kit, but as if thinkin' aloud, with tears in his eyes, "Dear, thoughtless, innocent child! The Lord keep thee! Oh, oh!... Can it be that so young and joyous as you are, Kitty, you are by nature, even now, a child o' wrath an' a vessel o' damnation?" Did you ever! Poor little Kit run off a-roarin! Nobody could say 'minister' to her for a week afterward, without she'd become sober as a little judge.

I don't dare to offer you no more o' the quince; I'm disgusted with it. Just take some raspberry.

When I heard that Mr. Bascom was attentive to Rachel Parrott, I thought I'd die laughin'! Says I to husband, "Mr. Bascom attentive to Rachel?" says I—"to Rachel Parrott! That lively, high-spirited girl!" says I. "Rachel Parrott never 'll give him even half the chance to be attentive to her! Rachel's Parrott's a good girl—a real Christian, if there's one about here! But Rachel Parrott won't endure even to think o' bein' any minister's wife—above all the wife of a minister as solemn as Mr. Bascom." When next month I heard their engagement announced, I couldn't believe it. What in the world had got into her—Rachel Parrott? It seemed to me a perfectly onaccountable, onnateral engagement.

But, comin' to think it over, I could notice that 'twasn't so extraordinary. You see, that winter Rachel's sister, poor Annabel Parrott, she'd died very sudden. Of course, Rachel hadn't gone out none after that—I mean to no parties, nor to church-so-ciabiles—no lively little doin's. When she'd been with

other folks, the girl made such an effort to behave like her usual self, that we hadn't any of us suspected that her mind was so deprest, an' constantly growin' lower an' lower. 'Twas nateral enough that Mr. Bascom, bein' her pastor, should see Rachel frequently. She'd come to feel a great dependence on Mr. Bascom's religious conversation; and in particular on his gift in prayer. Oh, Miss Pingree, that man could pray! I've never heard anyone like him for it! It most brings the tears to my eyes just to think of it. I tell you, you *knew* the Lord was listenin' to him... Rachel felt a strong admiration for his serious manners—had a real kind o' awe of him in general, though certain sure she hadn't no fear of him. Why should she, for that matter? In short, Mr. Bascom 'd come to exert over her, in one way or another, Rachel feelin' as she did, what husband called "a complete personal fascination;" just as some strange critters, not a bit so trusty as good ministers, does over nervous animals... Well, when Mr. Bascom decided that he'd fell in love with Rachel Parrott—fallin' in love, that is to say, after his gloomy "A-Charge-to-Keep-I-Have" sort o' lettin', himself do it—why, what with all her spiritual acquaintance with him durin' her affliction, an' what with her gloomy state o' mind, an' her awe, as I've said, Rachel was very deeply impressed when Mr. Bascom proposed to her. So she promised to marry him... Loved him? Oh, ondoubtedly she b'lieved she loved him. Thinkin' you love's much the same thing as lovin'—while it lasts—it's more or less dangerous, accordin' to circumstances. Anyhow Rachel Parrott said, "Yes"—an' the engagement was give out.

They was together, as 'd be expected of 'em, from that week. It looked as if there wasn't nothin' more to be said about it by any outsiders. But there was a deal said. Especially that Judge Parrott an' Mis' Parrott felt very much troubled about the matter—"for particular reasons"—so the gossip went. I could guess the reasons. But I said nothing. One day Mis' Parrott come over here, with a lot o' cup-towels to hem, for the afternoon. Mis' Parrott an' me'd always been very good friends, though not as intimate—week in, week out—as some. We hadn't more'n begun to visit together that afternoon, when Mis' Parrott spoke right out to me, in confidence, of course—about the objections to Rachel's marrying young Parson Bascom. I hadn't been far off in my notions. Rachel was the only child now—Mis' Parrott an' the Judge was completely centered in her happiness. I needn't tell you that they had a very high opinion o' Parson Bascom, as pastor—a wonderful spiritual-minded, uncommon intellectual man. But that was just the worry!—if such a man was the sort to make Rachel happy as a husband in a life together? For, after all, 'twas a woman's marryin' a man, not just a minister! Both parents felt strong doubts o' the outcome for Rachel. For they was both of 'em perfectly sure Rachel nowadays wasn't really herself at all, as the old song says. They'd an idea 'twas a quite temporary, unnatural, highsterical state o' mind Rachel had fell into since her sister's sudden death, on account of just that sad occurrence. They didn't think Rachel, by her nature—her bringin' up—her temper'ment, an' what else—at all suited to marry any minister—

Mr. Bascom least of all! Some day her old health—her old high spirits—her love o' the world—her likin' for gay society so nateral to her age—all that would come back. Her parents hoped and expected so. But *then* Rachel might find out she'd made a very sad mistake—'n couldn't correct it. You've known such cases, Miss Pingree? There isn't no finer, an' nobler, an' higher, an' usefuller life than a minister's wife's is—or ought to be. But the Lord's got to do more'n just incline your heart to it—He's got to *make* your heart for it, to begin with. I've known a good many minister's wives, in my life. Seems to me that if a woman don't feel that she's, so to speak, *called* to the ministry, 'most as much as her husband is, she can't be happy herself nor make the world o' folks around her happy as she should do, no matter how she loves her husband.

Well—to come back to Rachel Parrott's engagement. Her parents had had a good deal to say to both parties already. The Judge had talked very frankly to Parson Bascom. Only it hadn't done no good. Mr. Bascom behaved perfectly proper in the conversation—said almost nothing—'cept " 'twas a most delicate topic—there was a strong spiritual side to it—Rachel's welfare in the next world, as well as in this one, might be part o' the question... " They both of 'em would make it a subject o' solemn further consideration, an' o' prayer together, daily." But Rachel wasn't so composed nor reasonable. She wept and argued, an' asked 'em if they wanted to "convince her out o' bein' resolved to lead a happy an' useful life, with a man in a thousand? " And so Mr. Bascom was, certainly—

but I'd rather marry one o' the nine hundred and ninety-nine!... Some weeks passed. At the end o' them—well, the minister he'd become as firm as a new tombstone in the matter. He "desired no more discussion of the topic, unless Miss Parrott requested it." Rachel said she wished nothing further said to her, "provided Mr. Bascom didn't feel there was cause... he was able to judge for his part in the question—she knew her own mind perfectly." So there it was!—a sort of lock-out to all the rest o' creation! Of course, in a way, they were quite in their rights, there bein' no sort o' personal objection to Mr. Bascom, in the usual sense of such a thing.

"Yes... she's old enough to know her own mind," says Mis' Parrott, says she that day to me, with a deep sigh, "but I fear she don't. Father an' I can't do no more now, 'cept just hope that between now an' the marriage somethin' or other'll occur to Rachel that'll all at once shake her out o' this lowness she's got into. *Somethin'* that'll make her feel like her old, frolicsome self, for even only ten minutes! It might be the beginnin' of her *wakin' up*, so to speak. I'm pretty sure she'd discover in a flash, that she isn't and never should be the wife for the Reverend Leander Bascom; not for any such serious responsibility as a minister's partner... No, no!... that's not the kind o' husband she needs! Why, Mis' Gallup, you surely remember? Our Rachel was a laughin', light-hearted, high-spirited girl; not this pale, sober, wilted-down sort of a creetur, made such by our great sorrow, —who's *stayed* so by Mr. Bascom's help; an' now

wants to marry him... Besides the question of her happiness, there's that other consideration—I quite agree with you, it's far more serious, exactly as you say. Is anythin' more unfortunate, in a religious society, than a lively, jest a bit worldly, minister's wife?—whose heart is gay, an' can't be keyed up to no other tune, an' wasn't never meant to be keyed different? Oh, Mis' Gallup, I'm so troubled for my Rachel?" An' Mis' Parrott's voice choked up, she couldn't speak no further.

I met the two several times a week, after this. Mostly they'd be walkin' or ridin', along some quiet road; Mr. Bascom talkin' to Rachel in his low, earnest way, or readin' aloud to her, out o' some gloomy-lookin' little book. His fav' rite poems, accordin' to what husband made out—I'm glad I don't know 'em, I wouldn't be hired to read such po'try!—was "The Course o' Time" by a man named Pollock. Another poem he used to speak a good deal at diff'rent church-occasions; twas called, I b'lieve, 'The Grave'—I think 'twas a man named Blair wrote that. For what wasn't poetry, he'd big volumes o' sermons by Jonathan Edwards, and some by Edward Payson—so husband said. Terrible good men surely!—but not sorts to chirk one up—I know *that* much myself. Once Mr. Gallup was lookin' around Mr. Bascom's study; an' he told me that evenin' he'd never seen so many books with such solemn titles, in one man's library, in all his life. Husband remembered quite a few o' the titles. There was "The Sinking Sand; Or The Short Hourglass"—"The Mourner's Cordial"—"The Better Visit; Or The House Of Mourning"—"Solemn Thoughts For Thoughtless Pilgrims"—an'

dear knows what else!... The couple seemed to take special pains as to visitin' sick an' dyin' members o' the congregation; an' Rachel certainly attended every funeral.

Now, with all this—you know how it is—'twas perfectly amazin' to me how *like* Mr. Bascom Rachel Parrott was growin', day by day. She never stopped no more for a little chat with her friends in the street, or at the post-office. "'Twas wastin' minutes that'd ought to be better spent, Mr. Bascom thought." And so they'd ought—maybe—but who's ever goin' to spend all their minutes better? She wouldn't accept so much as an invitation to tea, unless the minister was invited too. Any droppin' in an' out o' her young friends houses, of a mornin' or afternoon? No—"Mr. Bascom always expected to read aloud to her, for a certain number o' hours—daily." She told husband that Mr. Bascom'd "set her a course in elementary theological works; he thought they might be useful to her." She never picked up a magazine, unless missionary, nor so much as once opened her pianna!—"Mr. Bascom was o' the opinion that gineral literature an' music,—exceptin' sacred music, on Sundays—was constant snares to our spiritual progress!" She giv' up lookin' at so much as the cover of a fashion-monthly in a bookshop!—"Mr. Bascom was very anxious she should use her full influence against the prevailin' attention to display of dress among females." (You'd ought to have seen her new frocks!—hers, Rachel Parrott, that'd used to be all furbelows from head to foot!) It's an actual fact, Miss Pingree, that for a month, reg'lar as the church-clock, you could a-seen Mr. Bascom an'

her, walkin' together up the street, to the cemetery on the hill. There they'd sit down, alongside poor Annabel Parrott's grave, an' watch the sunset out. "Mr. Bascom considered 'twas edifyin' in our pilgrimage to meditate on the onsartinty o' life!—especially when we was near to the last restin' place o' those dear to us!" Ondoubtedly! Makes life so much less onsartin,' don't it?

Husband said 'twas the worst case o' what he called—lemme see—oh, "morbid religious depression"—he'd known. "But," says he to me one day, "the Parrotts can well wish for *somethin*, to happen. I b'lieve 'twill come. I don't know what; but it'll come, I feel somehow sure—very likely it'll only take some precious small matter, all of a sudden, to start that girl's nature to goin' right again; clear of all this business, like a clock that's been out o' good runnin' order. For she's *too* far, not to come back, Rachy is! I've known of such morbid states of a woman's mind before now... And of her gettin' shet of 'em surprisin' quick! Only they must do all they can, the Judge an' Mis' Parrott, to hold back the weddin!"

"Well," says I to him, "if that's the cure, I wish a good-sized speritual firecracker, or two, 'd go off this minute, in Rachel's head—one to completely conflaggerate her, so to say—all at once!"

But some weeks passed; there wasn't no outlook. As for the marriage, it was to come off in course o' some months, not many at latest.

You bein' a Congregationalist, Miss Pingree, instid of a Presbyterian like me, I dare say you don't know that we call one o' the ginerall meetin's

together of our ministers, for church-business, " the Synod. " The Synod's very important. It takes place periodical; locality and so on arranged long before-hand, of course. Well, that year, Miss Pingree, Synod was to be held over in Baskerville. In those days, holdin' Synod meant a great deal of a matter in' most any town; much more than it does to-day, when folks either ain't as pious as their forefathers was, or else don't wish to be thought so. When 'twas Synod, the ministers and elders—my!—how they came to it, from far and near! Up our way we quite expected, if 'twas convenient, for 'em to fetch their wives and daughters along with 'em. They looked forward with pleasure to attendin' all the meetins, to bein' entertained in the town—to seein' each other, an' so on, I assure you. You know what ministers are as to that—just about like ordinary folks.

Well—as it happened, Rachel Parrott's aunt, Mis' Captain Bissell,— she 'twas Libby Ann Blauvelt, the teacher,— a fine woman, too!—was livin' over to Baskerville. Havin' almost no family an' a large house, Libby Ann was expectin' to entertain three or four o' the visitin' clergymen, with their wives. She sent for Rachel Parrott to come over, to spend the week—to help entertain. Parson Bascom 'd stop at Mis' Bissell's durin' the Synod. He drove Rachel over several days before. Husband an' I went later—the morning the public meetings were to begin.

Janey, pour Miss Pingree a glass o' water. Now you can run out into the kitchen for your supper. Don't forget milk for Martha Washington's kittens.

Well, we arrived at Baskerville safe and sound,

and was very handsomely received. The Synod begun. Besides Parson Bascom, there was Reverend Luke Chandler (from Gander's Mills) an' his wife, with Rachel an' us—at Mis' Bissell's; also Reverend Ephraim Scullem, from Apple Hook, an' his wife; as well as a couple more preachers whose names I disremember, and some other folks. A whole houseful, I can tell you! But come the second evenin' we was there, as if we weren't sufficient, what does Mis' Bissell do after the evenin' meetin' was done, but invite in a lot more people, to take some refreshments! Her house was right next the big church. So in they all came. 'Twas quite a number of others—includin' the leadin' members of the congregation, with some few young folks, not all of 'em professors yet, an' several strangers. We had conversation, an' a little sacred music, an' we promenaded around from the piazza into the hall an' from the hall into the piazza, an' so on. 'Twas an exceedin'ly agreeable occasion, altogether.

Among all o' the folks there I kept my eye on Mr. Bascom, as he went walkin' about or sittin' in some corner. He seemed sober an' more silent, that young man, than if he'd been brought to Baskerville to be tried for heresy! He looked as if he disapproved of Mis' Bissell's little party, and of everybody in it—or not in it! Soon I begun to guess why he might feel particularly unsociable—I mean so very much more abstracted and sober. 'Twas on account o' Rachel Parrott. Rachel was actilly flyin' about the rooms, she was so busy; he'd precious little chance to monopolize her. He didn't like *that*!—minister was man, you see. But for another reason, I hadn't

seen Rachel Parrott so lively, so int'rested in folks, so chirked up, not in many a month! In fact, what with her duties for Mis' Bissell, an' with Mr. Bascom bein' so occupied with Synod-business, Rachel an the minister'd really seen almost nothin' of each other for several days.

The evenin' at Mis' Bissell's was pretty well over, the company about ready to break up—when Captain Bissell he hems, and speaks up loud, an' says he:

" Well, my friends! Suppose we all be seated for a few minutes, as soon as convenient. Reverend Mr. Bascom's goin' to lead us to the Throne o' Grace. Rachel, if you 'll kindly hand Mr. Bascom the Bible an' that hymn-book, over there, on the stand? "

For—at such gatherin's—part social, part religious—there'd be readin' the Scriptures, then a hymn sung by the company, then a prayer'd be offered—after which the folks 'd bid each other good-night. 'Twas customary—expected by us. I often look back on such occasions with a deal o' pleasure, Miss Pingree. Those was days when there was an idea that God was, so to speak, always a member o' any society that was worth mixin' into, in this life down here; and that if we wasn't disposed to remember Him in our little assemblin's together in this world, 'twouldn't be strange if He wasn't particular about knowin' us in His big Meetin' in the next. So we all settled ourselves round the rooms, an' got still, for the religious exercises.

But just there came in a matter, also o' custom. For—'twas a singular fact, Miss Pingree, that while in our section there was always the practice for a

prayer to follow direc'tly after the chapter in the Bible, an then, last of all, for a hymn to be sung—*after* risin'—why, in plenty o' parts more or less about us, includin' Northwestern New York State—'twas jest as invariably the practice at such social worship, first to read, then to sing, an' finally to offer the prayer. Seems very little difference in the two ways, of course; but in each case 'twas quite a fixed programme—a thing taken for granted.

Now, I shall never, to this day, understand exactly what was the matter with Mr. Bascom that night, when he came forward as requested; without that his havin' noticed Rachel all that evenin' so brisk, an' so suddenly interested in everybody an' everythin' 'cept himself, had kind o' flustered up his mind. Besides, Mr. Bascom, I expect, was apt to be confused an' a little awk'ard, in conspicuous social sittiwaitions, an' out o' his pulpit; he was a good deal of a Seminary young man still. He bowed, an' took the books from Rachel. Then down he sat, in a ongainly kind of way, alongside the little stand where the candles stood. He crossed his legs—looked around very serious—an' give a loud "*Ha-a-a-m!*" We was quite a large circle round the room, as many as two or three dozen folks, old an' young. Rachel Parrott was sittin' next husband. Close to her come the Reverend Mr. Scullem an' his son Luther from college (Luther, he'd been a schoolmate o' Rachel; an' I must say if ever there was a *limb*, Luther Scullem was that limb!) On the other side, I remember well, sat Captain Bissell's cousin, Bethiar Kip, a deaf-mute poor soul! who'd lived with them for years.

Mr. Bascom opens the Bible—lets drop two big purple book-markers out of it—picks the markers up, wonderful confused by the accident—and then he starts out to read a chapter in Malachi! When he'd finished the chapter, says he slowly, shakin' his head quick, to drive away a night-moth hoverin' about it, "Let us all now join in"—of course, the roomful expected Mr. Bascom was goin' to say "prayer." Not the *hull* roomful, though; for Luther Scullem he didn't! I'm inclined to b'lieve Luther was at the bottom of all that happened! Quick as a flash, at that word "in—" from Parson Bascom, up jumps Luther from his seat, an' down plump on his knees Luther goes! *A-a-n-d* Miss Pingree, prompt as a regiment, the rest of us—husband an' I next, an' Miss Kip (she bein' very spry about it too, I remember) up we gets with a tremenjous rustle o' skirts an' a cough or two; an' down we all kneels, too, quite properly! Then dead silence!

But oh, dear me, Miss Pingree! We'd been—person after person, group by group, without a minnit's delay—we'd all been wrong about it! There we'd knelt down, leavin' poor Mr. Bascom, perfec'ly onmoveable—bolt upright in his chair, not budgin' an inch, and so consternated with the suddenness o' the action by the company, that he'd completely lost his head! For Mr. Bascom hadn't had the faintest intention o' offerin' a prayer yet! He'd expected ot finish his sentence with—"Singin' the eightieth hymn, 'I'm But A Mourner In This Place'—tune 'Cranberry'." At any other time—I've no doubt—he'd have thought before he begun, about the difference between the exact way o' conductin' such

religious exercises here, and the way so usual over in his own State; for Luther Scullem had happened to hear him allude to the very matter an hour earlier! Or else, right away, he'd a' done what husband calls "adapted himself to the majority." But it must ha' been that, along with his confused state o' mind, as to Rachel Parrott's liveliness, an' his dislike to even such social evenin's among church-members, an' the suddenness o' the performance on our side (thanks to Luther Scullem!) an' I don't know what else, why, there the poor man sat up—red as fire, his jaw open, his eyes starin' helplessly at all the coat-backs an' waterfalls an' capes an' shoe-soles surroundin' him—just like the Chinese court in the presence o' the emperor, in a picture-paper I saw once—only we was all kneelin' t'other way!

Meantime not one of us moved!—couldn't tell what might be delayin' the minister—expectin' each second he'd be through blowin' his nose, or what he was busy with. Then we begun to git as dumb-founded as he. But Mr. Bascom didn't—maybe he couldn't—utter a syllable to enlighten us. There he sat, the perspiration pourin' down off his face—so Luther Scullem told me. Luther had eyes in the back o' his head...he's got 'em there yet. Next, a few seconds later, each individual person in those rooms, each of course thinkin' himself or herself the only one darin' to do it, styly turns his or her head round, to see what was the hitch. Well—each one that turns, he or she meets some neighbor's eyes, turnin' too. Nobody spoke a syllable! Mind you, the hull affair didn't take half the time I need to tell it! But poor Mr. Bascom! Each second less

likely to git the best o' his embarrassment, he sat there, turnin' his head right an' left, in a perfect agony o' confusion... But it couldn't go on so. For presently Mr. Gallup, he ketched Capten Bissell's eye; an' husband always had a wonderful onlucky sense o' humor, an' was an awful hand to let it fly, jist at wrong times. First, husband and Capten Bissell begun to grin. Then every other head begun to grin. Next minute—you know, Miss Pingree, how ticklish such a sittiwation 'd be with young folks about—husband spluttered, an' Luther went "Ch-e-e-e-e," an' off goes one an' another; an' then, I declare for 't!—we all just give up in one ginerel bust! Such laughin', such chokin' an' stranglin', I never heard before, in all my born days; an' certainly hope I shan't hear agin—under such circumstances! For re'lly 'twas awful ondecen't! But 'twa'n't no use to help it! We was all completely upset; jist like a lot o' lively young children that's a-startin' in to say their prayers on opposite sides of a bed, at the same time. Some of us was on their feet, some still a-sittin' on the floor. An' then, in the middle of it all, 'twas suddenly noticed that poor Miss Kip was kneelin' placidly outside the circle, quite unconscious yet o' the mistake, with a big, orange tidy stickin' fast to her back—an orange tidy, that had "Peace Be To All Of You!" embroidered on it, in great letters. *That* didn't help much to compose us!

But the worst one of us was Rachel Parrott. It re'lly looked to me as if that child was goin' into a fit! Rachel sat on a ottoman, laughin' an' laughin' an' laughin'. Luther Scullem was keepin' her com-

pany. All the fun Rachel had kept shut away, somewhere inside of her, for so long—why, it seemed to have broke out, just the way a freshet does, all at once—maybe at the most untimely minute.

Mr. Bascom didn't so much as look at us. He marched straight up to Rachel, where she sat. My! how queer his face was, Miss Pingree! He looked at her as if he'd like to cast some evil spirit out o' the girl.

"Rachel, is this *you*?" he asked—very sternly indeed. "If so, please be good enough to collect yourself."

"Is it—me? Oh, I—I don't know, Leander," says poor Rachel, lookin' up into Mr. Bascom's eyes, her own swimmin' with tears o' laughter, her long brown curls tumblin' clean down her back—"but—well—I'm dreadful afraid it's a good deal what there *was* o' me—an'—an' p'raps all there *is* o' me!"

Mr. Bascom stared down at Rachel perfect'y black. But the smiles went on strugglin' all round the corners of Rachel's mouth. Then, very slowly—re'lly, as if *terrified* somehow—so to put it—he says:

"Miss Parrott, a minister's wife with so ready a conception o' the ludicrous would hardly be a helpmeet to her husband, laborin' in the Lord's vineyard. Beware lest, when His Day come, He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh at you—and—(Mr. Bascom glanced round at the roomful o' us)—at others with you here." My, Miss Pingree! *How* he spoke those few Bible words!—I'll never forget!"

Then Mr. Bascom turns square round, ketches up the nearest candlestick to his hand, an' he walks out o' the room without a glance or another syllable

to anybody else! It was just like a scene in a story-book.

But it wasn't to be only like that—unfortunately. We was all beginnin' to be sobered down; Mr. Bascom's sudden marchin' off, made us grave as judges, in a jiffy. In fact, we was all re'lly ashamed for actin' so like folks possessed. But poor Rachel! In spite of what Mr. Bascom had said—mebbe that made her worse—it did actilly seem as if the girl was clean bewitched, exactly the other way from what she'd been. Right straight off agin she went, the minute Mr. Bascom'd turned his back! An' off it was, with a vengeance! For it took us women-folks a good hour to get her quieted down in Mis' Bissell's back-room there—what with salts an' scoldin', an' everythin' we could try on her. My goodness, such highstericks! You could hear her all over the street. Once she fainted clean away. After she came to, she was calm enough. An' with that, I took notice of a most extraordinary change in her whole face, now 'twas clear—a change I was glad to notice. *She was back again to herself!* It was Rachel Parrott, the real Rachel, returned to us, after all these months when she'd been—where?

Several o' the company went upstairs—apologized to Mr. Bascom. That is, the men-folks did that. They said Mr. Bascom sat in the upper hall—perfectly quiet—ice-cold. He received the excuses very stiffly—in fact declined to accept 'em, or to come down stairs an' allow any of us women to make our'n. It was too bad, that part of it—wasn't it?... To this day, I can't altogether understand how it was all of us was so struck by the drollness o' our

sittiwation, an' the onmoveableness o' *his'n*, when kneelin' there, one by one, we'd all been tryin', to steal looks over our backs... But I don't think even a minister'd ought to have made so serious a matter out of it, when 'twas all over—do you? He might ha' remembered that sometimes it seems as if—you know Who—got into folks, when an unexpected little thing happens—even in meetin'.


To finish up tellin' the story, next mornin' when we came down to breakfast, Reverend Mr. Bascom was gone! He'd left a letter for Rachel Parrott. She showed it to her mother. Mrs. Parrott let me see it. 'Twas a formal breakin'-off o' their engagement; an' it ended up "See Ecclesiastes, VII. 6." We looked it up. What do you think the reference was?—"For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool."... True—but if laughter is foolish, nobody who loved Rachel would mind bein' counted a fool with her. In any case, Miss Pingree, for once her laughin' saved her happiness in this life; and I don't think it spoiled her chances of any joy up there in Heaven... From that very night, she was a changed girl, or rather a girl—as I've said—changed *back*. Her nervous balance had swung straight round, the Bascom 'spell' was broken. Rachel Parrott was the merriest girl you could find—once more.

Synod broke up. When we got home, we found that Parson Bascom had been there before us. He'd made some hurried arrangements; he was ready to leave the parish for good!—did so almost immediately. Nobody hardly saw him before he went away—to Albany or Saratoga, I think. He got over his anger after some time though; he wrote to Ra-

chel, Parrott beggin' her pardon for " the unseemly and evil-tempered way " in which he'd acted toward her; an' askin' for " a renewal o' their former reciprocal relations! " But 'twas months too late. Rachel had seen her mistake, plain as day. Her mother told me, that in the letter she wrote Mr. Bascom, declinin' further correspondence, Rachel used the words: " *I* was never engaged to you... It was somebody else—not *me*! " Awhile later she married Ashbel Piper, as I've said. So *there* the story ends!.. She'd had a narrow escape from what, I guess, is about the most dangerous misunderstandin' a woman—or a man, either—can pick out to have—a complete misunderstandin' with one's self.

Come now, let's step right into the parlor, Miss Pingree. 'Tis a very warm evenin' for September, ain't it? Take the rocker!





(TO EVARISTE SORRANDE-LAUZUN)

OUT OF THE SUN. *

DAYNEFORD laid down the short, last letter, finished; shut it carefully into the envelope and sealed it. With a steady hand he wrote the address, "The Honourable Frederick Frene, The Brasses, Godalming, Surrey, England." Italian posts are deliberate; but his cousin would have the letter by the week's end. In any case there was no hurry; all business-affairs always had been kept in precise adjustment, year in year out, during Dayneford's solitary and errant life. He was keen on saving post-mortem bother to the few persons concerned in his existence or rather in its ending-up, even if they were neither particularly near or dear. Besides Freddy—dear old chap!—knew the whys and wherefores of any matters to be left in his discreet care. The thought came now to Dayneford, though not for the first time, "What a good thing that Freddy and I have always been such pals! That I've never had any secrets from Freddy, no matter what sorts for the rest of the world!... Funny to think of it—but

* The incident here presented forms the last chapter of a psychological romance, prepared for private print only, under the title "Into The Sun." At the request of readers of the complete novelette in question, the episode is here given independent place.

it's because I've always been so willing to speak the truth to Freddy about everything, that Freddy will know now just exactly how best to lie for me!... Ah, Freddy's one in a million for this kind of a situation! "

He got up slowly, as if very tired, and stood a moment looking around the darkening room. It had only northern windows. All the heaven, from over Ischia-way, high above Naples and the Punto di Sorrento, as well as the sea beyond the Rocks of the Sirens, were dark with cloud; though sunshine from the other direction had still a word to say in the atmosphere. The library was a pleasant place on such dull, variable afternoons. As would have been expected by at least some of Dayneford's friends, the walls were tinted in the significant green; a soft yet warm nuance, with a few details of dull red to vivify. On the pianoforte, with its broad scarf of garnet raw-silk stuff, embroidered in green and copper with a quatrain in arabic—an acclaim from Abu Nuwas to music and love—lay two big orchestral scores—"Parsifal" and Goldmark's "*Die Königin von Saba*." Beside them rested a well-worn volume of Beethoven's sonatas, with a bit of emerald-colored silk slipped in at the beginning of "*Opus 111*."

Dayneford's glance moved on. But it rested again on the great heap of burned papers, crowded into the cold hearth. That heap was a sombre witness to what had been his principal occupation ever since last midnight when he had—decided. Irritating little Italian apology for a decent fireplace! How it had annoyed him, and how Gino had laughed down the annoyance, while they were beginning their domestic

installation in this peaceful Capri retreat! Gino had vowed that chimney was capacious enough "to keep a whole regiment warm"—if one knew how. What fun Gino had made, when the fire was eternally burning-out, instead of behaving itself like a well-conducted English institution! Ah, those had been the weeks when their new life together often had seemed a sort of serious, beautiful jest to them; though perhaps not so disinterestedly charming to Gino as to him, Dayneford, in view of all the later insights that this evening's state of affairs summarized and compressed definitively.

Dayneford walked to the hearth once more, to turn over that blackened heap of letters, photographs, journals and what not else, that he had done well to destroy carefully. No, there were really no legible fragments! All was dust and ashes; just as, it now seemed to him, his life, and his soul had become dust and ashes, having arrived at this last short hour of—so far as he knew—his possession of either soul or life!

He came toward the great intarsia table. All was neatly arranged, quite as usual, minus only the *plein-air* carbon-study of Gino nude, sitting on the rock below the Villa of Tiberius. That portrait was charred to nothingness, across the room.

Once more he looked about the library. Never had it seemed more perfected in its atmosphere of cultured repose, though by only those quite simple and improvised conditions that he had been able to bring together. The pictures, all low-hung and well-lighted, were mostly photogravures. They were not many; but they were all subtly expressive of

something to him—each a symbol of a certain current, constructively or destructively most potential in his psychology and his daily life—as that life had been *always*. . . . There was the Rembrandt etching, the little Japanese landscape by Teisai Hokuba, the two ineffable Madonnas by Coreggio, in the Dresden Zwinger; the lovely "Lampadiforo" of the Terme, in Rome, Andrea del Sarto's young San Giovanni, Bazzi's San Sebastiano, the engraving of Jupiter and Cupid, by Raimondi, after Raphael. In a farther corner, beyond his writing-table, and on a corner of the bookcase, stood a fine marble copy of the Hermes of Praxiteles. On a little gueridon was listening, in his perpetual youth and absorption, the Narcisso of the Naples Museum,

Ah, his books! The library of almost every man of like making-up, whose life has been largely solitary, so concentratedly from the inside, is companioned from youth up by innermost literary sympathies of his type. Dayneford stood now before his bookcase, reading over mechanically the titles of a special group of volumes—mostly small ones. They were crowded into a few lower shelves, as if they sought to avoid other literary society, to keep themselves to themselves, to shun all unsympathetic observation. Tibullus, Propertius and the Greek Antologists pressed against Al Nafsaweh and Chakani and Hafiz. A little further along stood Shakespeare's Sonnets, and those by Buonarrotti; along with Tennyson's "In Memoriam," Woodberry's "The North-Shore Watch," and Walt Whitman. Back of Platen's bulky "Tagebuch" lay his poems. Next to them came Wilbrandt's "Fridolins Heimliche Ehe," beside Rachilde's "Les

Hors-Nature; " then Pernaum's " Die Infamen," Emil Vacano's " Humbug," and a group of psychologic works by Krafft-Ebing and Ellis and Moll. There was a thin book in which were bound together, in a richly-decorated arabesque cover, some six or seven stories from Mardrus' French translation of " The Thousand Nights And A Night "—remorsefully separated from their original companions. On a lower shelf, rested David Christie Murray's " Val Strange " and one or two other old novels; along with Dickens' " David Copperfield," the anonymous " Tim," and Vachell's " The Hill," companioned by Mayne's " Intersexes," " Intre " and " Sebastian au Plus Bel Age." The latter little book was lying flat on its face, just where Dayneford had laid it down three nights ago, when he had sprung up from the sofa—to tear open feverishly, fearfully, hopefully—yes, even then a very little hopefully!—Gino's long-expected telegram. Was it only three nights ago...? Dayneford had lived much since then! Absently Dayneford took up " Sebastian " and re-read a page which his own pencil had marked, sometime or other; a passage that in English would run somewhat thus:

... " But Bernard could never become quite sure
" of his recovery—of his immunity. He had sharp
" examples of that fact. One evening he was stroll-
" ing home, that is to say, returning to his hotel,
" through a quiet residence-street, when there happen-
" ed to pass him quickly a slender, graceful lad,
" perhaps of seventeen. The boy was tall, of an
" oval face, with dark, eager eyes. He called out in
" a high, clear voice, a voice like a wood-bird,
" some casual words of adieu to a companion just

" turning away. The personal resemblance may
" have been vaguer than Bernard fancied ; but that
" made no difference—its type-mischief was instant
" and complete. The full psychic apparition of
" Sebastian flashed once more upon Bernard's soul.
" All the peace of the quiet afternoon, of the week,
" of the month was over ! Again was Bernard's heart
" embittered and quivering with old retrospects, old
" torments. The knife had recommenced its turning
" in the wound, the unhealed sore was again chafing
" in bleeding rawness... Oh, nothing had *cured* him
" yet ! Nothing seemed likely to cure him—ever !
" The punishment for his mystic folly, for the second
" folly of its sort in Bernard's life, was still cruelly
" upon him ! It seemed now greater than he could
" bear... "That cursed boy !... That cursed boy !"—
" he cried out aloud in his anger and agony, repeating
" the words over and over. But somehow the accent
" of his reiterations became gentler, ever gentler ; till
" at last Bernard's voice quite broke, speaking them
" softly. The tears stood in his eyes ; and the rough
" phrase was no longer a malediction but a caress
"—" That cursed boy ! — That cursed boy ! "...

Dayneford put down the little book, unstirred now by its message. He looked up and around slowly. One would hardly suppose that here was a man making calmly what was his farewell survey, as proprietor of so much comfort and simple elegance. " Yes—it's odd to realise *that* ! " Dayneford murmured, squaring his stalwart shoulders. He laid the letter to Freddy on the post-box, where very early next morning old Elena would look for it. By it he set a lira, to pay for the *raccomandare* then

placed, likewise most carefully, an envelope with a hundred lire in it, for Elena's first exigencies—*after*. Then when he had locked a window, he realized that there was really nothing more to do in his own house, so well was it set in order.

He was ready! It did seem curious that he—so well, so strong, a type of whatever speaks outwardly to the admiring world of vigorous manliness—of perfect health—he, untroubled by any vulgar worriments—that *he* should have done, or should be doing, for so few moments longer, these commonplace little things. All, all for his last time! Yet somehow that ultimate aspect did not lend the actions much dignity. Besides, great things, small things, nothing mattered now, nor had many emotional meanings! He was conscious, in these instants chiefly of feeling so tired—so inexpressibly tired! Of longing for Nothingness and (oh, it surely must be so!) for a swift and immutable Rest!

The hall of the villa was dusking into violets and browns and blacks, as Dayneford came out from the library. Only the long garden, seen beyond the glass-doors, was still sunshiny. "... But it's not 'into the sun' for me—this time!" Dayneford said to himself, as he came along. "It's *out* of the sun!... Into the Shade—for good and all!"

He took up his hat, then laid it down again. He would not need a hat... As he did so, he caught sight of a tightly-rolled pair of gloves in a corner of the hall. He picked the gloves up. Yes, the identical pair of gloves that Gino had worn that miserable Sunday!—when he, Dayneford, had tried to find out whether Gino really had been lying to

him, was capable of lying to him!—had fabricated that history about whose gloves they really were,—about had been the reason of that long afternoon's engagement over in Naples. Oh, well—any such incidents made a clear and stale chronicle now! All lies and what not else, had culminated in yesterday's sailing of the *Krishna*, with Gino and Stephen Crome tranquilly bound for Colombo... If he had not been such a blind ass, how many weeks of doubt, of torture, he could have spared himself! So much of these recent days and nights of a death-fight between passion and conviction, between fire of heart and ice of evidence! So very large a part—perhaps?—of the war between "No, no!—I will *not* believe!" and the inevitable "I must believe!"

Dayneford found the sweat coming out on his forehead all at once, as retrospects and queries began attacking, enveloping, asphyxiating him, so to say; disturbing that glacial tranquility that he felt was now his supreme good. He exclaimed like King Lear, "Oh, that way madness lies!"—and struck at the gloves; dashing them away into some dim corner forever, with all the story whereof they were part, so far as he was concerned. As he put his hand back into his pocket, he felt the rustling of a crumpled paper. He pulled it out. It was not a thing to quiet the nerves in such a supreme mood and hour! But Dayneford re-read Gino's despatch calmly, perhaps for the hundredth time since it had arrived, two nights earlier:

"Impossibile venire, molto occupato avanti partenza domenica. Inutile per tutti due. Preferisco visitare altre scene melodrammatiche e penose. Scriverò da Alessandria o Cairo. Saluti ottimi. — Gino."

Verily, that was a characteristic telegram ! Most characteristic, as Dayneford to-day understood Gino's cynical insincerity, Gino's lazy egotism, Gino's feminine hatred of those recent " melodramatic scenes," in which pride, contempt and sudden misery had made Dayneford's sufferings sharply articulate. But now Dayneford only curled his lip a little, as he ran his eye once more over the unkind lines. He was past being much moved by them. He tore the telegram into minute fragments, disposed of them carefully, and then passed out into the garden, locking the door after him. He went rather swiftly down the long walk toward the broken wall, the cliff, and to whatever was beyond them; beyond this world of mirage and disappointment for so many such as he !...

Autumn roses were still plentiful in the garden. Against the wall of the small green-house, the violet-red bougainvillia was a gorgeous mass of colour, in the last orange-red light. The sea was opal, blazing off to tones of fire, where it met the sunset. " My last Capri sunset ! " Dayneford said softly to himself. He picked a rose (it was a yellow rose, lovely emblem of regard which is jealousy !) from the bush which Gino once had insisted was " a little bit too tall," and accordingly had nearly annihilated, in his drastic notions of pruning. Gino, as he had looked that morning, rose into Dayneford's memory—the symmetrical, boyish, barefooted figure, gliding so lightly about the rose-tree ; every movement filled with an italic-hellenic grace ; the lad's smiling beauty of face under his dark hair ; his laugh that echoed around the garden, like the sound of a bar of

silver, as he disputed ideas of horticulture with old Niccolo. But as Dayneford turned toward the broad south wall, by the cactus-hedge, he recalled Gino, not less beautiful, at an hour when that sinister *other* side—the real side, as it seemed now—of Gino's nature, had so startled and terrified; that sunny noon when Gino had been discovered, stretched out lazily, half-naked, on the wall, slowly cutting into thinnest pieces, inch by inch, the big green lizard; still alive—and writhing in agony under Gino's sharp pocket-knife! The boy's half-curious, half-voluptuous smile!—as he cut and sliced by millimetres the wretched, bleeding little beast, apparently with the pleasure—no, doubtless with far more!—that a human creature so young and beautiful as Gino might be expected to take in plucking a handful of roses! Well, Dayneford had now no poetical illusions as to Gino's possessing particular tenderness of temperament toward the sufferings of anything or anybody—alive or dying or dead! At the same time recurred to Dayneford's thought, those contemptuous sentences that Karl Collingwood had uttered on another morning, in just that same spot in the rose-garden, when the news had come to the three of them of the suicide, in Spezia, of Maurice Vayre: "Yes, we're a queer lot, most of us, I'll admit!" had exclaimed Collingwood. "Generally we're bound to be unhappy, right and left, into the bargain... I expect I know about as much of some so-called heart-breaking sides of it all, as do most of the Race. But that even a damned unlucky fool like Vayre should ever kill himself for *that*! It's a bit too—too—well, too hellenic!... Too much the

classic thing for me, I must say I... But Vayre was quite mad of course. Don't you think so?"

Dayneford remembered now that he had assented, in a way, to Collingwood's scornful confession of unfaith. But he had said what he had said, not able to foresee Stephen Crome's advent to Naples, the *Krishna*, at anchor off the Immacolata, Crome's careless introduction to Gino at the Nautico; and thence the fatadic, tortuous, torturing history—even then not far ahead. "... That a man should be such a damned fool as to kill himself for *that*!..." Well then, he, Dayneford, must be another such "damned fool?" Or mad? Or perhaps both? Certainly time was ripe for Dayneford to guess, to know—himself! Or rather, no!—it was too late to bother!

He leaped the wall, without even glancing once more at his house and garden. He crossed the little strip of broken ground developing quickly into the abrupt, sloping path—down to the cliff's veritable edge. Attaining the head of the path, he sat down on the long stone seat beneath the old statue. The statue itself was softly rose-yellow this evening, in that magical light. Dayneford looked up at it, in a final and calm admiration. In such a transfiguring radiance, the statue was indeed wonderfully like Gino, though only through an odd coincidence; for surely it had been carved, by its now unknown sculptor, not later than the Hadrianic epoch. Yet—good God!—how like it was!... There was the same smile as Gino's—that smile of Leonardo da Vinci's "*Madonna delle Rocche*," or of Luini's "*Virgin in the Rose-Arbour*." Karl Collingwood had once pointed out the likeness, in a moment

when "sentimental;" what Karl called "sentimental"—that is to say, not sneering about a matter of which he knew much, but reserved more; including experiences known to be of profoundly personal unhappiness.

The statue was wonderfully vivid this evening, against its background of rock and laurels, myrtles and other rambling greenery. The dead Marchese Spinalba had been lucky to find such a treasure. He had known admirably how to place it. The marble eyes of the youth seemed to be overlooking, in a Lydian serenity, the frightful precipices leaping down to the sea, the sea itself, the sunset. One might fancy the survey as absorbing all the world of life—of love—of death. "Of death!" thought Dayneford, half-apostrophising the statue, as he sat below it—"even death some men choose when they kill themselves for *that*! For that terrible other illusion, that supremely bewildering chaos of one's emotional Being—that rejection of our visible Ego, in our remediless dissidence from a whole world, to right and to left about us!... When one is quite fool—or mad..."

How long Dayneford sat there beneath the statue, I do not know. It must have been fully through two hours, or even more. At length he suddenly roused himself less from reverie than from a stupor of profound mental weariness. The statue was no longer yellow. It stood out pallid-white, against the now much-deepened twilight. The sun had quite set. Clouds and darkness were over the sea westward. One single horizontal stripe of dull ochre lingeringly marked the point whence had passed away all the

glory of the evening's world. The hour was already dusky and chill and still. An owl flitted past the statue and Dayneford. Beyond the bench, stretched down—half-traceable—the final twenty or thirty yards of the awful little path, steep and smooth, that came to end only at absolutely the last centimetre of the cliff. Beyond that threshold of death (to any live thing not winged) lay a gulf of profound emptiness, now seen—felt—as merely a brown-blue void, a space terrifying even to thought, because of its hideous finality! Terrifying, that is to say, if one had no errand exactly to its terrors...

Yes, yes!... One would have only to begin running as fast as possible, and to keep on running so, straight down that path, just as if playing some sort of game with Gino, in the rose-alley of the garden! Not checking oneself at all—a thing that in fact would be difficult from the first bound... How easy it was to be! Did others find such a business hard? Not so would he find it!... The sombre finality of such an evening-hour and errand was indeed in key with the themes of incredulity and of its rebuke, in Daudet's "*L'Arlesienne*"—"Say now, if you dare, that nobody kills himself for love!..." Was Dayneford wandering a little in his mind, which seemed to him so clear and tranquil?—or was somebody, maybe a supernatural orchestra somewhere, playing softly, with all the despairing melancholy which pervades every measure of it, the "*Adagietto*" in Bizet's music to the drama of the luckless Frédéric's ruined desire to live any longer? Over and over again, Dayneford seemed to hear it—that *Adagietto* of such infinite sadness—renunciation—elegy!

In any case, the time had come "to do it," the moment had really arrived for accepting the consummation which Gino had brought upon him—mad?—or only as another "damned unlucky fool," sanely willing in his turn "to kill himself for *that* ?..."

For that!... After all, what a stupid, blind, dull-witted world, a world of ignorant, credulous men and women it was—is! Obtuse world, no matter how discerning it tries to pass for being! Oh, those other people everywhere, who seem not even to guess "why" such or such a man's life can begin and can be led, as the predestined, sole reason for the tragedy of such a death! How many histories even he, one single individual, knew!... Why, there was Billy Gilderoy—Gilderoy still young—just in the middle of his brilliant professional successes—Gilderoy rich, manly, so good-looking, so admired and loved by a thousand good friends; envied by other men for his unlimited popularity among women; the hero of *racontars* enough to give him the reputation of a sort of Crichton-Don Juan. At a little hotel in Paris had come the interruption of all that situation, in the way of a bullet in Gilderoy's heart—"an absolutely inexplicable suicide"... There was Harry Alvanley—brave young soldier, gallant gentleman, the pet of the smartest drawing-rooms in town; engaged to as pretty and charming a girl as London or any other place could have held for a fellow to marry. One week before the wedding, had come Alvanley's "mysterious" suicide, in his own quiet place in Berks; where indeed they had found him dead, with only a big, black heap of burned papers—to tell no tales. There was Trayford the banker,

jolly, busy Trayford, that long-headed, shrewd, successful prince of his financial circle. Daily he had seemed to grow more unwell, more of nervous aspect, plainly less interested in any sort of joyous social life; till on a certain Sunday night, Trayford had been found in his little photographic cabinet, the cyanide wilfully swallowed for *that* reason. So a letter to Dayneford—the only letter Trayford left—had told. Everybody, except Dayneford and two or three other men, had emitted the usual exclamations of bewilderment at “so wholly incomprehensible an event”—“of course, a sudden attack of neurasthenic madness”—and so on! And what about Ayre-Oram?—Ayre-Oram, the great irrigation engineer, the man spoken of right and left, as “the finest mathematical intellect of his profession”—what had happened to Ayre-Oram? Dayneford, and sundry others, could have thrown some light on Ayre-Oram’s disappearance from activities during that winter in the States; as well as on the murder which was followed by Ayre-Oram’s taking his own life; though that story would have been bitterly challenged by many men and women who were sure that they knew “quite everything” in the tragedy—knew Ayre-Oram as intimately as they knew themselves... Ah, the stupid, stupid, great world! Yet after all, likely there was an advantage that the world in general should be just so stupid, forever on wrong tracks of explanations or sympathy. Appearances were saved; and so the secret of *that* vast and multi-coloured and limitless Freemasonry of a mystic Sex—Intersex—remained just that much more its own property, *in saecula saeculorum—amen!*

..... Therewith Dayneford got up. He was not trembling, he was not cold, he was not frightened, he was not troubled in any way. Nothing at this moment was in his confused, weary mind so much as the memory of Gino psychically; the passionate sense of a wasted idealism; of a man's heart abused and bruised; of the shipwreck, utter and complete, of all that which insidiously, beautifully and now terribly had become life to Laurence Dayneford, as any kind of existence worth his while... Oh, the pity of it! If it only might not have been! ... That vain outcry against fate for a moment possessed Dayneford's sad soul... But it passed; again there was left only his yearning to get away for ever, to Somewhere or to Nowhere; if thought, sentence, thereby could cease to recur as vehicles of pain!

So Dayneford turned to the statue, shimmering in the violet twilight. He plucked a spray of myrtle—the flower that Gino liked. He leaned, and laid his throbbing forehead to the marble.


" Good-night—good-bye !..." he murmured; not to the statue. " Buona notte, buona notte!—addio, addio !... You brought me into the sun for a while! I am going out of it now, and away from it—and from you, for good !... Good-bye ! "

He pulled off his coat and waistcoat, and dropped them at the foot of the statue. It was a gesture quite unconsciously symbolic. In letting fall the garments, he half-remembered what Gilderoy had often asserted—that some mystic part of our psychic selves becomes inevitably attached to whatever we wear or carry habitually. If so, at least a vague, final aura of himself perhaps would be left with

what glimmered there beside him, as if representing Gino !... Who could prove the contrary ?

Daynesford straightened himself with a quiet, manly movement. Then he began running with increasing speed and momentum, down the steep white path, straight to the top of the cliff... He did not make any baulk, as he neared the edge. On the contrary, when within a yard or so of that awful limit of life for him, he sprang boldly, without a cry or other sound--upward and out, in the full curve of a diver from a spring-board. Out, out and down--into the night and the abyss.





(TO JOHN RUSSELL DAVIDSON)

THE DELUSIONS OF PAUDEEN.

PAUDEEN sat on a stool, in a corner of the roomy Bow stable, polishing harness. He was also whistling softly "Let Erin Remember—" while duly causing each "B" on the head-stalls to shine superlatively. Opposite Paudeen, comfortably disposed upon a feed-box, sat those two youthful inseparables—August Bow and Van Cross (much referred to socially as "The Cross-Bow") kicking their heels, and helping Paudeen do his polishing: that is to say, by their looking-on. It was Saturday morning. The two chums—the reader may perhaps have met them somewhere else before today—had nothing else to do—like the young lady in the ballad. Conversation had assumed, as frequently under similar circumstances, a personal aspect.

"Green? You ever green? Oh, now—really, really, Paudeen!" remonstrated Van. He winked at August. August whittled industriously, but found immediate opportunity to return the glance. August divined that his trusty partner was trying to lure Paudeen to some story or other, about Paudeen's favorite subjects—himself and his immediate experiences. Paudeen had been sent out, from a crowded tenement, in a "West Side" street of New York,

directly to the Bow country-place, certain years earlier. As before them Paudeen had never beheld a representative hay-field or a genuine vegetable-garden, he could not begin to be an adept in country-affairs till "The Boys' Aid Society" opened his eyes. But Paudeen had proved an intelligent newcomer, as well as an active, straightforward and sunny-tempered lad. So Mr. Bow had retained him as a young squire-at-arms to Job Hedges, head-man of the stable-department; and for other utilities.

"Me? *Me niver green?*" retorted Paudeen, rubbing away at the leather. "I assure ye, Mither Van, I was that green that God's grass was rid beside me! An' how could I be but that same? Me livin' all me time, prviously before, wid old Julia Maginnissy, in the Av'nue A? 'Tis not much countryfied, the Av'nue A isn't! Ah, 'twas sport I was to Job an' th'other man, Tad Hedges, the onadhaun cousin to Job, that summer your father bade me help on the place! Little I knew'd about the country! So 'twas the fine fool Job, and that divil Tad, often made of me, wid mighty common matthers."

Paudeen laughed ruefully, though he lifted a pair of twinkling eyes from the headstall.

"Common matters?... Such as what?" asked Van.

"Very common matthers indade," returned Paudeen. "Why, f'r instance, I mind me, of the first mornin' I was here. I come down into this same barn, and I saw something odd—for me—hanging up yonder. - 'An' what's that, Mr. Job?' says I. Now 'twas one o' the garden-rakes I was lookin' at."

" 'That?' puts in Tad Hedges—Tad worked now and then on' this place, though he'd a farm of his own, up the mountain—' Ye mane *that* thing? Why, sure 'tis the long comb that we combs the cows wid every Saturday night—onc't a week—reg'lar,' says Tad, says he, very sober. 'Cows is ontidy beasts. In this country, ivery gintleman likes to see his cows, on a Sunday, standing in a row in the pasture, wid their hairs nately combed, an'—forbye 'tis long enough—dacently parted, along the spine o' their backs? ' "

" 'Quite so. You'll be a-doin' that prisintly, my lad,' says Job, says he."

" 'It's myself'll show you, how our cows is combed with that implement,' says Tad. ' "

" 'Ah,' says I, ' and the big brush over there? ' (Now 'twas the stable broom.) 'That's the cows' brush, I make bold to belave.' "

" 'Right you are and bright you are, my lad!' answers Tad. 'Just that it is! An' look!—them wooden articles, a bit beyant, is wood-combs, always kept special for the calves. Calves' coats is sp'iled by iron-teethed combs.' "

" 'But ' I says, lookin' at the hay-rakes he was lookin' at, and at the garden-rake, too. 'why are they afther havin' thim handles so long? I'd say 'twas ill-convanient to have a handle like that a-one on any comb—big or little.' "

" 'Not so,' answers Tad, wid niver a smile. —'they always puts long handles on cows' combs, and on them for calveses too; so that ye can measure the part ye make in their coats. Likewise can kape it straight while ye dhraw the part. Cows' backs

and calveses backs is quare, deludherin' things; so a rule is nade'ful, Paudeen.' "

" ' Ah! ye combs along wid one ind, while ye measures wid the other,' says I. ' Sure that's labor-savin! ' "

Here both August and Van exploded. Paudeen grinned respectfully, and continued:

" ' But that was only wan o' the useless notions they give me in those days. The same evening after I was comin' here,' twas Tad was yonder. Says Tad—' Paudeen,' says he, ' it's Job bids ye go down the long lot directly, to fetch the young horse ye'll find there.' "

" ' It's abler to fetch me, the horse is—I'm thinkin', answers I a-laughin'." "

" ' Don't be fresh, my boy! says Tad. ' Just be off, and catch the young horse direckly! ' "

" ' And how'll I aisiest do that same thing?' I asks. ' John Maginnissy's horses, in Av'nue A, in New York—' "

" ' Ah, yis yis, to be sure! But niver mind John Maginnissy's horses. Ye can't aven counthry-horses and thim city-horses,' answers Tad. ' Now listen! Ye must run into the lot, an' call out the horse's name, more betoken ' tis Wildfire—but always Firey for short, ye know!—as loud as iver ye can. At first, Firey he'll pretend he don't hearken ye—the cunnin' baste! But do you just kape a-runnin' afther him, an' callin' out his name, " Firey!—Firey!—Firey! "—commandin'-like. Sure, all of a sudden he'll just turn and quite gallop to ye! Remember though, that did ye go softly to him, an' spake to him gintly, ye could niver, niver git Firey,

did ye chase him till daylight! The louder ye call, the sooner he comes! ”

“ And did you really do what Tad told you? ” asked Van.

“ Indade, an’ I did! I run down into the middow, an’ I begun shoutin’ ‘ Firey! Whooroo! Firey! ’ as quick as iver I got inside the bars. Sure ye can guess that in less than ten minutes ’twas a fine situation I was in! Horse? I’d caught no horse! But instid, ivery man, woman an’ child about your pa’s place, Misther August—all the fam’ly, along with the house-servants an’ the neighbors—the very dogs—cats—every crature, any thing wid ears and legs!—they was all down by the long lot, thinkin’ for sure ’twas the new corn-crib afire, no less! An’ the more I shouted, an’ the faster I kep’ on a-runnin’, the harder galloped the horse, an’ the worse was the stirabout! At last Job come upon me fairly wid his fist, an’—oh, well, ’twas but that arristed me progress! For a week, all the village thought I was mad! An’ small wondher!—what wid the horse being the mare yonder—she’s lookin’ at ye, this blissid minute, the dear baste!—an’ not so skittish-like, and her name Kitty! ”

“ But didn’t Tad Hedges catch it, for putting you up to such a mistake? ” asked Van, walking off to rub Kitty’s demure nose; as, over in her stall, she whinnied politely on being mentioned.

“ Ah, but I hadn’t the heart to tell on him! ” responded Paudeen. “ Twas but his joke, ye know. So I let them all think it was some quare, stupid notion of my own, just. ” Which complaisance had certainly been good-natured in the victimized Paudeen.

" Tell him about father's prize-pigs, Paudeen," suggested August, relinquishing for good the chest, and stretching his legs. It was nearly four o' clock.

" Ah, sure *that* was indade a wicked thrick they put upon me ! " exclaimed Paudeen. " Ye see, Mr. Van, there was to be a big stock-fair, for the county, a fortnight ather I was first here. Mr. Bow, he had four fine pigs he was manin' to send to the same. Fat as butter thim four pigs was ! Well, the time come for gettin' matters o' one sort and another ready to be taken to the Fair Grounds. So the athernoon before the same, up comes that smooth-tongued, desateful Tad Hedges. ' Paudeen,' says he very serious, pullin' out a little book o' pencil-notes, important-like — ' Paudeen, my good lad, 'tis ' the Fair's the morrow, you know. I suppose ye've begun this long time on the pigs ? Illygant they must look, sure, since ye're that wonderful tasty boy yersill. ' "

" ' Begun on the pigs ? ' says I. ' What mane ye, Tad ? ' "

" ' Sure, ye understand the rules an' rigilations of the kind of fairs we has here, don't ye ? ' answers Tad. ' Specially the way that pigs is always to be prepared for the jury of inspecthers ? ' "

" ' That I don't,' says I, ' so will ye plaze explain the same ? ' "

" ' Why,' says Tad, ' there's prizes always is given in these parts, not only for the size of the pigs, an' their weight, an' their marks and the like o' that; but also for the taste an' illigance with which pigs is dhressed out and decorated up, for the judges' examinations. The rules o' the Fair requires ivery pig to be decorated up, accordin' to the fancy of thim

as is his exhibitioners... What! haven't ye heard o' *that*?... Oh, 'tis fine they are Paudeen! Some pigs has leather collars, with names in silver or in goold! Some has beautiful po'try letthered all along their sides! I remember 'twas one of our pigs, last year, he had the verse:

"I'm the last rose o' summer,
Left bloomin' alone.
An' though you mayn't guess it
I weigh forty stone..."

—Also plinty other sorts o' dicorativeness. Mr. Bow's not given ye no particular ordhers about gettin' his pigs *painted* as usial? Well, that's quare! But thin, there's some things ye are supposed to be afther knowin', wid no tellin'... Ye're terrible late tendin' to the pigs Paudeen! They go the mornin', ye know. I can tell you how to fix them up fine, howiver. So there'll be time! "

"You—you don't mean that you really went and—" interrupted Van.

"Sure, what else? Wid me as ignorant and desaved as a wood-pigeon? Your pa was away with Job. Tad Hedges, he told me just what was expected—so he said. Away he wint, to his home. What did I do? Indade, 'twas half o' that night I spint down in the Creek, wid me four pigs tied to two stumps; an' me a-washin' the pair, for dear life, till me arms ached; an' afraid, as 'twas, I was too late! An' thin, when thim pigs was dhry, 'twas me that took the rid an' blue paint Tad give me. An' I put the illigant, wide, rid sthripes on two pigs, an' splindid blue sthripes on the other two. An' the blue pigs's hoofs I painted rid, an' the rid

pigs's hoofs I painted blue : an' I gilt up their ears an' their tails, till they looked like virgin goold ! Thin I tied the four o' them in four corners of the cow-house, so hard and fast they could nayther lay down nor sit up. An' then I left them alone—poor things !—to dhry. 'Twas near midnight afore I was finished wid them ! ”

“ Crackey ! What happened the next morning ? ” asked Van, in a spasm of mirth over the decorated pigs.

“ Next morning ?... Soul o' Robert Emmet ! But the likes of what happened indade ! ” Paudeen returned, laughing with them and slapping his leg. “ First, 'twas Job—thin Misther Bow—thin the ladies, who'd come back from the theayter in town—thin all the house and neighborhood, pourin' into the cow-stable ! An' such screamin', an' lafture, an' iverywan wishin' to know who in the cold world had played such a thrick—an' why !... But when they found out 'twas me the thrick was on, well—they laughed all the harder ! Misther August's pa, he was kindly about it ; for the paint was a bit dhry, an' stuck so fast that no washin'd bring it off ; an' the four pigs looked that unhappy, an' was that terrible sick, there was no Fair for thim ! So Mr. Bow, he laughed a bit longer. Thin—' Let them stay home this year,' says he... For weeks the two poor beasts was like poles before the barber-shop. Ivery day I was asked by somebody how was the health and complixions of my fash' nable new family.”

“ It seems to me Tad Hedges ought to have caught it, for fooling you so ! ” said Van, disapprovingly.

"Tad? Oh, sure, he'd slipped off to his own farm up the river, the night before," laughed Paudeen. "His time as extra hand on the place was just out, or I'm thinkin' he'd niver have dared be that ow-dacious-like. Job nor nobody niver knew a word from me about how the paintin' came to be made. 'Tis only a black heart means ill with a joke, or that takes a joke ill, ye know. Mesill and Tad Hedges, we're good friends, these long years, surely!"

Here August heard the carriage at the front-door. So he and Van ran off, postponing other adventures of Paudeen in a world where much is at all times to be learned--whether by young stable-boys or by the most wise of old men.





(TO WALTER ASHBURNER)

LIBERTY: A FABLE

IT was much colder for even late November weather than a look out of doors suggested. Certain trees and shrubs were still covered with moribund green, red and yellow leaves. The sun shone in a blue sky. But thin, early snow lay frozen on the ground. The atmosphere was more frosty, day by day.

In the aviary, some of the birds suspected the fact of winter, although Miss Ollapod took every precaution for the comfort of her pets. They were shut in now, for the season, among stately palms and flowering growths. The newly-imported Java sparrows feigned, or felt, uncommon sensitiveness. They kept away from draughts. The minah-bird abode in a corner, maintaining his misanthropic reserve. He declined to utter a word, except a grumble when the conservatory-door was not latched. The three newest arrivals, the parroquets Vert-Vert, Bleu-Bleu and Bleu-Vert, screeched and scolded in annoyance at what they considered an untimely confinement; when the sun and the world outside seemed to them most attractive. They had come in August.

The tall, thin-legged crane (considered altogether

a most genteel personage, if one of little intellectual force) stalked about somewhat aimlessly. He stood still every few minutes, to remark politely to the irritated parroquets:

"Remember, it is really the beginning of the kind of winter they have in this country. It is not a joke!... You must be very, very prudent... You will get to understand it by and by, I am sure!"

"Understand it?" snapped Vert-Vert. "I do not want to understand it! I want to get out of doors! To have this place opened, as it used to be! To enjoy the sunshine, out there! How? Why, cannot the lady put us back into the large cages, yonder in the arbour, where we were. To be shut up this way, in a cramped glass-room, before there is any earthly reason for it! It is perfectly insufferable! I pity myself, victim of tyranny!"

"But think of me!" exclaimed Bleu-Bleu. "Of me, also a prisoner on such an exquisitely lovely afternoon! I, who am all color, all life—"

"And all tongue!" croaked the minah, from his perch. The minah was a savant. Like many savants, he was a trifle embittered against any want of valuable knowledge, especially when such defect was shown by a voluble tongue.

"My coat shines like metal—I heard our mistress say as much yesterday!" cried Bleu-Vert, in his irritable turn. "Who can admire me, pray, except two or three people, now and then, if I am cribbed up here? Could one only get away from it! Oh, my beloved Brazil!... But the sunshine yonder! Ah-h-h!"

"You three silly, sentimental ignoramuses!" snorted the minah—for he was unable to contain

himself longer. "You do not know what you are talking about! You could not live a day in that raw air, out there in the garden. It is not half as cold, either, as it will be soon! Where would you fly to, you three fools? To your Brazil? That is rather distant!"

"Goodness me, don't talk of one's flying off to anywhere! Or of doing anything except endure your abuse!" replied Bleu-Vert; who, by the by, was the youngest and handsomest of the trio of parrots. "Are we not locked up here shamefully, like felons, with no more chance of our enjoying the first of blessings, that crown all natural rights, that highest Good, sweet Liberty!—than of—well, of finding decent manners in a dried-up old minah? *W-a-a-a-h!* I despise this land! I detest our mistress who, I suppose, pretends everywhere that she does what is vastly the best thing for us! I despise all your opinions, minah! Yes, particularly that! A fig for what you call winter! *Evviva la libertà!* Oh, tu cosa divina, per tutto il mondo—la bella libertà!... All that's Italian!... Oh, to be free!—free!—free!" And at this, Vert-Vert and Bleu-Bleu, partly in sheer nervous excitement, partly to forestall the old minah's sarcasms, shrieked out after Bleu-Vert, "Oh, oh, to be free!—free!—free!... Oh, divine boon, to all creation—Liberty! Sweet Liberty!"

What with their squallings, clapping their wings, and wild flutterings about, the other birds in the aviary became quite upset and startled.

"Fools!" observed the minah to himself. "Ar-rant fools! Liberty is not for fools! And most men—and all women—and many birds—are fools!" The

minah was a king of Australian Thomas Carlyle, you observe.

Out in the back-garden, Dora and Tom, Miss Ollapod's little nephew and niece, were jumping about, partly in play, partly to keep warm. Cora and Tom looked in surprise, toward the palm-house and aviary; for the disturbance was audible quite startlingly, despite closed doors.

"Oh, do look at the birds—at the parroquets, Tom!" exclaimed Cora. "They are flying around in there, like anything!"

"It's the old minah-bird teasing them, I suppose," answered Tom. "Yes, it's the cross old minah." In this world, one is often blamed for things not his fault.

"Oh, indeed! Well, then," cried Cora, "he shan't be allowed to tease them, without somebody's taking their part! Here goes!"

"Oh, Cora!" protested Tom. But it was too late. The bit of hard snow had departed straight for one of the panes in the conservatory, a part of which was the aviary in winter. Cora had meant to bestow only a good thump with her missile; and so to startle the aviary's occupants into general peace. Unluckily the putty to hold that particular pane had dried away from the frame; only a few touches of it were left. The smart tap of Cora's projectile knocked the glass inward; it fell, shattering to a dozen pieces,

"Run, run, Tom!" cried Cora, horrified. "The birds will all be out in a minute! Call Wilson!"

Tom ran, in a panic. Cora fled after him into the house, crying out for the man.

Meantime, a rush of cold air had invaded the birds' warm asylum, with the clatter of glass,

"Ah, see, see! The gateway of Liberty!" screeched young Bleu-Vert, flashing to it, as soon as he observed what the crash and aperture meant for him practically.

"Hurrah for the gateway of Liberty!" echoed Vert-Vert.

"So be it! Adieu, everybody!" was young Bleu-Bleu's almost breathless ejaculation, as he flashed through the opening, like a falling star, or a gaudy day-firework.

"Good-bye," called Bleu-Vert and Vert-Vert, following him into crystalline air and clear sunlight without, unsuspecting of temperature. Liberty was achieved, as by a miracle!

The three beautiful creatures, wild with delight at the unexpected granting of their prayer, yet a little at a loss how first to utilize such hap, flitted across the deep garden, and so onward, over the roofs of the big stables beyond. Their wings had never been cut; Miss Ollapod twice had put off that prudent attention. The fugitives made no delay in the garden; but in a neighbor's premises came a halt of some minutes... Ah, just then the sun vanished! But the three birds flew on. They soon, were a little dismayed to find snow-flakes suddenly falling from the light, grey clouds, drifting far above. Still—the party did not stop. A safe distance from pursuit! That was the first idea now!

Meantime in the aviary, the saturnine minah, the bewildered crane, the parrot with the yellow tail, the fourteen Java sparrows, the middle-aged owl,

and most of the remainder of the feathered society, chattered aghast, or were thoughtfully contemplating the chilly "Gateway of Liberty!"—as poetic Bleu-Vert had termed it. None of the other birds desired to take advantage of it; and Wilson was already beside it. The older birds, birds of experience, did not feel like speaking to one another. The sadness of a great mistake, made by their three late companions, was too evident. The stay-behinds were almost as troubled by the incident, as by the chill draught entering their comfortable home.

"Fools!" repeated the old minah. "They will be frozen after sundown! It is a ridiculous world!... Idiots to wish for what they cannot well use!—ever must misuse. They do not understand! But there! I suspect that other two-legged animals are not much cleverer than foolish parroquets!"

By instinct, Vert-Vert, Bleu-Bleu and Bleu-Vert, in full flight, had reached the city's largest park. It was a vast tract; much of it still wild—like the suburbs near it. It seemed unexpectedly, exceedingly cold, that place! No doubt about its wintriness of ozone! In spite of high spirits, the parroquets felt most keenly the wind across lawns and lakes, each instant. The snow-squall, too, continued. And yet this was not really bitter weather.

"I—I—never realized——what snow was——before now," remarked Vert-Vert.

"Y—e—e—s! And it is curiously disagreeable," replied Bleu-Vert, throatily, with a slight cough. "The air here seems so very thin, too! But never mind! Hurrah! Only think, we are free! Liberty! Ah, the charming word."

"I think we are free—zing," gasped Bleu-Bleu. For even Brazilian paroquets show a depraved inclination to puns.

The runaways went on and on. Flight was a joy, albeit if a colder and colder joy. They were soon far out of the city. Before and beneath them lay a frozen countryside. Hamlets, pallid fields, glazed streams, forests thinned of green foliage.

"Where shall we stop—for a while?" asked Vert-Vert. "It does not grow warmer."

"Stop? Not hereabouts," answered Bleu-Vert. "Courage! Courage! One must get used to all new good things! Remember, it is liberty! Anything can be acquired as a taste, anything endured, for the boon of liberty!" Here he coughed loudly, again.

It grew dark early, for the sky had quite changed. Fortunately, the snow ceased falling. The daylight passed—night darkened. A few stars came out, but they were not the southern stars that the paroquets knew. The three birds stopped further activities, alighting in a grove. They squeezed themselves into the hollow trunk of an old beech. The beech's protection, and their united warmth, saved their lives that bleak November night.

Daylight came. "We really—must obtain—breakfast. But where?" asked Vert-Vert helplessly.

The three birds stared at each other, in confessed depression and worry. Never had they failed to find the seeds, the water, the soaked bread, the bits of fruit, in plentiful provision—until now. Ah, such tender care and sustenance belonged to their past condition of a cruel, slavish subjection to others; to tyranny,

to imprisonment. Lamenting it, meant repentance, regret for their bold revolt to better themselves by freedom... Regret? Perish the thought! Still, one must eat or die. Finally, they found some dozens of wood-berries. By good luck, the berries were not poisonous. But, as it was, the bitter and acid fruit digested most uncomfortably. Water was not got without search.

"Liberty?... H-m-m!" exclaimed to himself half-frozen Bleu-Bleu. "So far—not what it should be! Freezing—starvation, too—I call it."

Certainly freedom thus far, meant sharp cold, beds in a rotten tree—no baths, no breakfast! It appeared a questionable privilege, really.

The morning sun lighted the wintry woods at last. It lighted them with so little warmth in all its glow! Just then, a stag and a hind, with their young family of two, came past the bush on which sat the cold and hungry little runaways.

"Well, well!" ejaculated the hind. "From whence, pray, did you pretty birds come? You aren't dressed at all, according to winter-fashions in our country."

"We are lovers of liberty" answered Vert-Vert. "We believe liberty is the best thing in the world, for all creation. We have fled to this forest to enjoy liberty. Only—well, the eating is poor—lodging seems chancey. And going about *is* frightfully cold."

"Lovers of liberty?" said the stag. "And so you escaped, to possess your freedom? Where did you say you have been living? How?" The birds told him.

"Well," the stag remarked, "I must say that—

pardon my freedom!—under the circumstances, I think you have been decidedly foolish! Better go back to your aviary, before another sunset! It is wonderful that you have stood the cold of last night so tolerably. This night will be colder. Yes, go back! For, dear friends, sometimes in society there are kindlier, wiser conditions than liberty—be it for birds or beasts, or mankind. What liberty sometimes includes is a fatality—even to a whole people. Liberty is not for the many. Rather is it for the few! Forget it. Flee it! Go back.”

“Go back? cried the three fugitives, their pride touched to the quick, and feeling suddenly almost warm in excitement. “Not we! Shame on you, O, Stag! Without perfect liberty, life is death! All the world was meant to be free!”

“Oh, very well then,” replied the stag gravely. “If you are resolved so earnestly to live free lives, why, all honor to you for it! My race, too, loves freedom. Others of our teeming beast-world pine if taken from enjoyment of liberty, however poorly they live in it; often, I assure you! But then, this is our own climate, dear strangers, not yours. We can assume the full responsibilities of our liberty!...”

“We will make them ours!” said the parrots. “Suppose then you come awhile with us,” suggested the hind, amiably. “We may be able to help you. You can fly overhead, while we run below. We go to a fine, wild spot. Besides, you will not be so lonely with us; for, to tell you the truth, I doubt if the other birds, hanging about here now, will have very much in common with you.”

The parroquets accepted this suggestion with meek gratitude. They advanced through the wood all the morning, keeping more or less along with the stag, the hind and their little companions. It turned out to be a remarkably warm day, such as sometimes succeeds to a series of cold ones. The three birds kept fairly comfortable; that is, by exercising until they were sometimes ready to collapse from sheer fatigue. But then they were at liberty! They found some much better berries, and even a few bits of coarse bread, in a woodcutter's hovel. Such was the improved provender of liberty—sweet liberty! But they felt that they were working hard for it. Such a long cruel route!

Several days—luckily all calm, mild ones of the late autumn—passed. They reached the spot in the forest that the hind had alluded to—a region wild enough, surely! It was near a chill morass, soon to grow wind-swept and sunless. Other birds were thereabouts. The hind obligingly introduced the newcomers, right and left. But the forest-birds almost turned their backs on Vert-Vert, Bleu-Bleu and Bleu-Vert, as soon as they heard their names and beheld their feathers; snapping out something concerning foreigners and their terrible languages and absurd clothes. In response to Bleu-Bleu's timid inquiries concerning the shortest course to Brazil, or to any warm land, the hardy northerners shook their heads and tails, in ill-humour; and declared that they never had traveled so far away from home as Brazil, had no friends there, and never under any circumstances meant to have such. The parroquets drew away, silent. As for one very nume-

rous society, the pies, crows and owls, why, in spite of the stag's protection, they made such fierce eyes that poor Vert-Vert vowed in terror to the other two that it was easy to see of what those new acquaintances would make their supper, if they dared. Indeed, the danger, from wild birds and roving little beasts, was genuine.

Besides such inhospitality, when the stag explained kindly that the three birds had fled to the forest because of their desire for liberty, foregoing warmth and luxury--why then, to the dismay of the guests, great cackles and chatters--mostly of mockery--arose. A pair of stray robins exclaimed:

"Warmth?... A comfortable town-home?... Good society?... And they flew away?... They're crazy--crazy--oh, quite crazy!"

A crow sneered--"All the food they could eat? Think of that!" And again, "Such daft fools should be driven out of a sensible community!... No use for mad birds here!" With further comments.

Altogether the trio of wanderers felt deeper and more varied doubts as to the practical value of liberty for them, while that first dubious day in the forest-resort closed. They huddled beside the lawns to sleep, dreading every rustle near.

"Well, my friends," remarked the stag in the morning, as they sat in the sun, shivering, "of course you perceive now, plainly, that out here in the great, wild world you cannot expect to be warmed, fed and appreciated as you were in your aviary. But one thing you can enjoy to the full--liberty in the sense of the joy of going hither and thither--as do we stags, for instance. Nobody to startle or to

check you! Man is distant from beast or bird here. We are free of danger, so aloof are we!"

But lo! Awhile later as the stag browsed, with his family, and the sun shone warm, came the bay of a hound. It grew nearer and louder. A wild swan appeared, winging the air toward them, crying that her mate had been shot, beyond the hills; and that the day before she had seen an eagle—an eagle!—falling into the dark marsh, pierced by some unexpected sportsman's bullet. Never had hunters penetrated that grim retreat till now! It was no longer an asylum.

"Fly!... Fly!" exclaimed the hind in terror. "Hunters! A hunting-party here! Let us fly!"

In the wild rush of fear, the three terrified parrots also sped their cold way onward, fluttering over the leaping animals' heads. They realized now the last delusion for them in the great Good called 'Liberty!'

Before the afternoon was past, the miserable stag crossed the path of another man, with a rifle. He fired.

The shot was not disabling, not at once mortal to the generous friend of Vert-Vert, Bleu-Bleu and Bleu-Vert. There was yet time for the stag and his companions to fly in a new direction, for many a mile. Indeed in that wild tract the huntsman lost them! But, alas!—as they came to a deep glen, the wounded stag felt his life going from him. He sank down.

The hind couched beside him, and laid her beautiful neck across his. The fawns stood by trembling. From afar, came again a hound's cry... horn-echoes.

The three parroquets looked on, from a sere, wild vine, at this tragedy of the forest. As the stag was drawing his last breath, in blood and pain, he thought of the luckless trio. Raising his head, he gasped to Bleu-Bleu:

"This—also—is part of—Liberty!" He was dead with the last word.

Vert-Vert could no longer face the situation, the lesson, the future.

"Back! Oh, let us go back!" he cried piteously to the other two. "To the aviary, to prison, to anywhere that does not mean liberty for us! Not for all who praise it is it made! Fly, before we perish by liberty, in liberty!"

Lamenting and in dread, Bleu-Bleu and Bleu-Vert exclaimed likewise:

"Ah, yes! Back to what we called prison! For alas! Liberty to many created beings must ever mean disappointment—trouble—danger—illusions—misery grief, death!"

The unhappy hind and fawns did not notice the adieu. Their own cruel fate was not distant...

High in the air as they could, the three birds fluttered. The sun still shone out, and the better hours of each day a little warmed and cheered them. On they hastened. They found scanty rations—somehow. They guessed a course, luckily direct! Home and kindly captivity! That was what they sought now! Soon but a relatively short flight lay before them. Their latest stages had brought them speedily near to the open country first traversed; and they spied the welcome town. The weather was again sharply cold over all that section of the

country—the parroquets felt its terrors, and flew—flew—flew—for life, not for liberty!

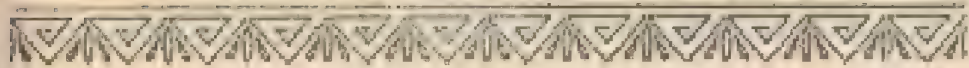
It was early dark. Wilson held open the door for the newspaper-boy to deliver the evening's gazette. Miss Ollapod approached from the stairs. In the journal should still be an advertisement, beginning: "Lost, three young Brazilian parroquets ..."

The trio of wearied fugitives fluttered in, over the man's head, and fell about Miss Ollapod's shoulders. In surprise and delight she nearly fainted. The children came running to her.

"Shut the door! Oh, shut the door!" cried Cora. "They'll get away again!"

If Cora had only known!

The minah grinned broadly and sneered and scolded next day, and for many days. The crane asked questions languidly. Not a bird in the aviary, however, succeeded in eliciting the story of those hours of sweet, blessed and supreme liberty; nor did either Vert-Vert, Bleu-Bleu or Bleu-Vert ever again make use of the word, nor appear to interest themselves thenceforth in any consideration of the topic.



(TO JAMES GIBBONS HUNEKER)

THE YELLOW CUCUMBER: A NIGHTMARE.

Being New Womanhood as seen through the prism of "A Yellow Aster" — "The Heavenly Twins" — "A Superfluous Woman" — "Sekhet" — and other stories of a certain school of female novelists, not yet extinct — unfortunately.

CHAPTER I.

PASIPHAE Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones began life as a wonderful little girl. Every hour of her childhood she heard whispered around her—"Yes, a very, very wonderful little girl!" At ten, Pasiphae was tall for her age, vaguely blonde, green-eyed, and with as much hair as *Mélisande* or Mrs. Restorer Allen. The hair would have been handsome, if Pasiphae Nenuphar ever had cared to take time to have it brushed. But Pasiphae Nenuphar would'nt take the time. She perfectly hated all manner of washings and combings. Whenever there was argument about baths or coiffeurs, she used to protest "Oh rotten, just rotten all that, you know!"

Pasiphae Nenuphar liked to stand on her head, to walk on her hands, to play hockey, tennis and football. At twelve years, she was so well-developed

that her near relatives thought it high time to put a stop to certain moonlight wrestling-matches in the barn, and to paper-chases in the woods; all with the gardener's nephew—a strapping lad of seventeen. But however robust of body, Pasiphae Nenuphar, even as a mere child, showed above all that she was a little girl of Mind. She never troubled herself to ask the opinions of grown-up women, who really knew things; and as for the notion of questioning a *Man* about anything under heaven, why, that absurdity never so much as occurred to her. She could always answer out of her deep, young Mind any matters that were open to it. For—"I know what I know! Yes! *That's qu-i-te* enough for Little Me!" she used to declare with explosive conviction. Such an attitude, of course, starts in the best way any young girl in her social career; provides her with truly intelligent ideas; and imbues her with helpful, sound principles. No wonder that everybody who knew Pasiphae Nenuphar went about exclaiming that she was a marvellously original and gifted little thing; perfectly on the road to grow up into a most interesting and lovely young New Woman. Which Pasiphae Nenuphar indeed became; in a way. That is to say, in the way of those people who admire young women of Pasiphae Nenuphar's sort. Otherwise this history would not be worth while.

CHAPTER II.

At sixteen, Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones was as strong as one of the Oxford Eight. She was likewise precociously cultured. She had read much; including particularly the Bible,

the Memoirs of Casanova, Machiavelli's "La Mandragora," most of Paul de Kock's novels, "The Kama-Sutra," Zola's "Nana," "The Newgate Calendar," the Koran, also those three or four picturesque little stories by the Marquis de Sade, Taylor's "Holy Living," the Burton translation of "The Thousand and One Nights," Butler's "Lives of the Saints," Voltaire's "La Pucelle," Thomas-à-Kempis's "Of The Imitation Of Christ," and sundry less common English classics, such as fictions by Mrs. Aphra Behn and John Cleland. As for Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and so on, Pasiphae Nenuphar considered them far too trivial and old-fashioned; just as she thought were standard historians, essayists and poets in general—though some of these works she knew confusedly—by names. Pasiphae Nenuphar, by the bye, dismissed the Bible completely from her approval—after due reflection; for she decided that the Bible "was too popular to be really *distinguée*;" besides which it gave a New Girl impure thoughts, and misleading ideas of Woman and of God. (By the by, Pasiphae Nenuphar always thought of "woman" as spelled with a big "W," and of "God" as spelled with a quite little "g".) On the other hand, Pasiphae affirmed that Casanova, and so on, had "a fine, stimulating effect" on any young lady of parts; they "taught her how to hold her own" when there was question of combative relations with a mere man. And so, as she grew older, again and again all Pasiphae's friends said of her, "Oh, what a fresh, innocent, strong-souled, soaring young Female! Mark my words, that girl will marry a Dook! Or Very Virtuous Sewer-Contractor, with

a love for orchids and Debussy's music. *One* or other type will be our Pasiphae's passive-fated Partner! And they will just revolutionize the world, those two!... My-y-y-y!"

CHAPTER III.

Pasiphae Nenuphar had a dear, dear young brother, named Judas Mohammed. Pasiphae often spoke of her passionate affection for Judas Mohammed. But for all that she quarrelled with the amiable Judas like a cat in a bag, and said severe things about his Boyish Intellect. Judas Mohammed was a pretty pink-cheeked boy, and clever too; though perhaps not quite so clever as his sister. However, at an early age Judas Mohammed, in his turn, had read a lot; including "going through" the Encyclopædia Britannica twice. So he could chat agreeably about Apollonius of Tyana, Etruscan symbolism, ski-sport, polarized light, original sin, Heliogabalus and homosexuality. Judas Mohammed had learned to embroider beautifully. Through his cravats, he had cultivated a fine sense of colours that made him invaluable to lady-friends, when shopping. Judas Mohammed also cultivated, in shopping, a gift for shoplifting. It was quite a joke what tricks that dear boy could do with his thin fingers and deep sleeves, at a lace-counter on a crowded bargain-day! Judas was of course a precocious boy-musician; he played the Sackbut and a Pianola-Okarina with taste. In short, Judas Mohammed was almost as modern a young human product as was Pasiphae. They used to feed each other cut-up angle-worms with brown sugar, while they argued, hours-long.

about degeneracy. Each Sunday they went either to a Max Reger concert, or to the local Monticelli-Hodler-Cubist Exhibition; or else to see what was new and nice-looking, over at the Morgue.

CHAPTER IV.

Pasiphae Nenuphar came to be twenty years old. She was now some eight feet high, and generally was considered stupendous—physically and mentally. She dressed beautifully, but so simply—just in plain red and yellow, or purple and pea-green; she liked quiet, artistic combinations. She often wore trousers at home, and sometimes when abroad. She was very athletic. She walked, she golfed, she danced, she tennised, cricketed, base-balled, lacrossed, pelota-d, swam, bicycled, fenced, wrestled (an old hobby) winter-sported, ran races, shot, hunted, rode her own mounts at horse-shows and hurdle-races, and climbed the most uncomfortable Dolomite-peaks like a chamois. She "studied" astrology, she "studied" jurisprudence, she "studied" Coptic; but somehow she never studied ordinary English enough to spell correctly. I have a note from her in my desk, in which "hoping" is "hopeing," and "separate" is spelled "sepperate." She learnt to "do" excitingly the "Dance of the Seven Veils" *à la* "Salome;" and she invented a special *pas seul* that came to be called in town, "The Pasiphae Jones Exposition Universelle." This she performed several times, always for the benefit of fashionable religious charities. She also learned to write shorthand, to eat hasheesh, to enjoy a narghileh and a Connaught *dhurdeen* (together) and to score for

full orchestra. She swore with manly deliberation; and her favourite expletive, of another colour, was one that is honourably—if incorrectly—associated with the famous General Cambronne. But despite all this programme of superficialities, Pasiphae Nenuphar never neglected her Great Intellect. For, at this epoch she read much philosophy; beginning with John Stuart Mill, Spinoza, and particularly the celebrated German professor, Doktor Rupprecht Schmalz-Bratwurst, authour of "The Finites of Infinity; An Analysis"—in forty parts. Pasiphae got through with such authors quickly enough, by using that well-known system as to serious literature, which is so much in vogue among American women—viz: the method of reading first every other page of a book, then every third page, then every fifth page—and so on. It saves time.

I need not say how quickly the matter of "Votes for Women," and of Suffragettism in general, took a vehement hold in the Great Mind of our Pasiphae. She knew by heart whole sentences, even those that were several phrases in length, out of the more notable speeches of Sufragette "leaders." She was twice locked up, for assaulting a policeman who told her paternally "to move on," in a Suffragette street-demonstration. She kissed publicly the Reverend Doctor Gump, because she thought that a suffragan bishop meant a Suffragette parson. However, Pasiphae gradually filled up chinks in her culture. She read Krafft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis," also Xavier Mayne's "The Inters-exes;" all of Miss Marie Corelli's stories; all Mrs. Annie Besant's books on Theosophy, a good deal

of Christian Science literature, and four treatises on Babism. She absorbed Miss Corelli's novels and the Babistic matter by a clever method of her own; namely by "sandwiching-in," in the first case, Edward Lear's "Nonsense Book"—and in the second, by alternating Bab theology and Gilbert's "Bab Ballads."

Yet with all these accomplishments, all this culture, Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones aimed at being charming—even as Ideal New Woman. She never forgot to be sensitive to proprieties—when convenient. She even confessed to a few quite old-fashioned, Old-Womanish notions. Thus she declared that men "were brutal," when they did not offer her a seat in a tram-car, nor take off their hats when she entered a lift.

CHAPTER V.

One evening at a prize-fight, Pasiphae Nenuphar met her Fate! It was, as had always been predicted, a Dook—the Dook of Peto-Buster. He travelled a good deal on his shape—as Americans say. He had a good shape. Also he had a large fortune, no legitimate relations, had been divorced four times—in each case with enormous social scandals—owned eleven motor-cars and a yacht; and, more or less as joint proprietor, he owned Mademoiselle Tata Sacréchatte. These attractions decided Pasiphae in the favour of Lord Peto-Buster. She began paying him marked attentions, at once. But she described carefully and frankly her sentiments, when she said to him—"I like you; and yet I hate you! I like you more than I hate you! Or else maybe its just the other way! For you see—you, my dear old man, are

only a mere Man! I am Woman—a New Woman the New Woman-Mind! All the same—well, *shall* we make a mess—I mean a match—of it? Hey?” Which shows how clear and logical an intelligence our elegant-mannered Pasiphae possessed. I have forgotten to mention that the Dook of Peto-Buster was the twenty-ninth man that Pasiphae had proposed to. The other twenty-eight beloveds had refused because they felt neither intellectual enough nor pure enough to be married to her.

“Pasiphae,” replied Lord Peto-Buster, after a certain nervous hesitancy, “I would gladly learn to love you. Maybe I could! But alas!—I cannot become your husband! I have not lived a spotlessly pure life. I am—well—I am a practical sort of woman-hater, by my natural temperament. Again, I have no real Intellect. I am a Swedenborgian. I dislike Empire fashions. I am bitterly opposed to New Womanhood, to Home Rule. Also every time I am obliged to listen to even a mere conversation on Female Suffrage, I have a turn of the spinach-coloured epilepsy!”

“Good Gawd! What ill-luck!” cried Pasiphae Nenuphar, slapping her thigh, in angry disappointment. “In some things, dear Peto-Buster, you seem to me so near! In others so far! I never could have thought of half of the far ones! And yet I am Thought itself!” Then’ after a moment, in which Pasiphae expectorated with a perfectly gentleman-like accuracy, she ended the disappointing conversation by saying, “You will kindly consider my offer as not made, my dear lord! I must be careful to conserve about me an atmosphere ever wholly

favourable to New Womanhood, "We will not wed."

Having thus slipped heroically out of a most painfully delicate sentimental incident, Pasiphae left Lord Peto-Buster's fourth floor smoking-room (I have neglected to mention that it was there that this interview had taken place, one Easter Sunday, at midnight, at Pasiphae's special request) by climbing down the ivy of the bow-window into the garden. She swam the moat, for a composing cold bath, and went to her baccarat-club, for a grilled bone and a game. She passed her day there, except for an auction at Tattersall's; was seen at Lady Eleazer Blumenkohl's dinner; whence she motored to the Opera, feeling stunningly fit. At the opera her wit was so sparkling that the electric lights were put out. As this annoyed the audience, Pasiphae Nenuphar was put out too—by the police—though with due delicacy of technique—no forced feeding.

CHAPTER VI.

Some weeks later, Pasiphae heard that Lord Peto-Buster had become converted to Female Suffrage and had now no objections to Empire toilettes. She arranged another interview with him. This time it was in the foyer of Covent Garden, during a performance of Gounod's "Romeo et Juliette." "Dear Lord Peto-Buster," urged Pasiphae warmly, "you cannot now have any reasonable objections for refusing me! If you admit only that, why, we can be married to-night, here—at the conclusion of the Opera! There is a foreign gentleman, you know, who sings the part of Friar Lawrence. He looks almost exactly like a real Catholic clergyman. Besides,

religious formalities are snobbish, where affinities are so strong as ours are at bottom. Your nice young secretary there, Willie Finocchio will do for your best man; and my dear friend Lady Sappho Sesame can act as my bridesmaid. What do you say?"

"Ah-h-h....er-r-r....so be it!" Lord Peto-Buster replied abstractedly but resignedly.

And indeed the simple ceremony occurred that evening, as planned. The witnesses included particularly the entire ballet-corps, some of whom seemed to think it funny that Lord Peto-Buster should decide to marry any woman anywhere. After the benediction, Pasiphae and her husband went on to supper at Lady Goodness-Me's ball, to announce the marriage. Lord Peto-Buster passed all the time that they were in the carriage, in analyzing his prior matrimonial experiences, or in inventing stories about what he catalogued as earlier or later love-affairs; all with persons less pure-minded than Pasiphae, all persons more womanly than any New Womanly sort. Pasiphae insisted on this discourse. Lord Peto-Buster called it his "oracular confession."

"I owe you every truthful detail," he declared. Pasiphae was delighted at his graphic chronicle. She asked many leading questions which showed how well she still knew what she knew.

At the ball, everybody was charmed by the news. Congratulations were endless.

As Pasiphae and Lord Peto-Buster were coming away, Pasiphae said, "I will excuse you from seeing me home, dear fellow. I have promised to take the early morning-class in pug-breeding, at the "Housemaid's Friendly."

"Quite so. And I promised Willie Finocchio to look in at 'The Moral Young Men's Amical Militia,' replied Lord Peto, "on Scizzors Street... In fact, Willie must be wondering why I am so slow. So—till dinner time tomorrow, my sweetest girl!"

CHAPTER VII.

But Pasiphae, now that she was married, was surprised at herself for such a lapse towards the conventional. Besides surprise, her conscience and her friend Lady Sappho Sesame, reproached her—as having been inconsistent with true "New Womanhood."

"Man is superfluous to Us," remonstrated Lady Sappho Sesame severely. "You have compromised the position of New Woman."

So, after a long discussion with Lord Peto-Buster, he and Pasiphae agreed on a separation for a term of years; or "till they should understand themselves better." The Dook of Peto-Buster went to Greenland's Icy Mountains, taking young Finocchio with him. Pasiphae stayed at home awhile, long enough to enter well into the most incandescent period of her life. In fact, now she came to her climax—athletically, socially and intellectually. She "studied" unweariedly. She discovered that there is absolutely no such thing as a *Leit-Motif* in all Wagner. She proved that all Turner's pictures were painted by Ruskin. She quite confuted the theory of gravitation. She argued with everybody. She talked brilliantly in all the Hupper Suckles, on the least provocation. It was at this time, too, that she wrote her great works—viz: "Parthenogenesis and Parallelograms;

A Study in Anatomical Geometry ; " and " Copulatives or Conjunctions ; A Study in Grammnatical Anatomy," and " Saunterings in Slums ; A Study in Chromatic Criminology. " Another of her works, " Le Goupillon Endiablé"—a fanciful trifle—was refused by most of the London publishers, and suppressed shortly after appearance. These books were widely popular among all Educated New Women. To that period of her life belongs also her art-productions ; particularly the celebrated statue-group from her chisel—" The Virgin and the Penitent Hermaphrodite." Then came her famous tour around the world. She made it with a male cousin of Lady Sappho Sesame. He was a most beautiful young military gentleman. They went as delegates for " The Society for the Prevention of Impure Ideas." Then Pasiphae returned to her quiet home-life. There was some comment on the fact that during it, and her husband's absence, she had six of the Heavenliest Twins that can be imagined. But then Pasiphae was a New Woman ; and they are known to have wonderful Intellectual Conceptions. By the by, her six twins grew up just as nice as she and Judas Mohammed had been when little... It has quite escaped me to record that Judas was dead. Judas had become an aviator, an amateur skirt-dancer, and—well, quite a good many other things. Unfortunately he died suddenly, of a fish-bone that went the wrong way ; though he was assured that nothing whatsoever was the matter with his breathing. In fact, he was being " treated " (expensively and by post) by a famous " Christian Scientist."

Pasiphae's six children were all attractive because

their mother insisted on their receiving no kind of bringing up, nor any particular moral or religious instruction—though their minds were kalsomined-over with various smatterings of this and that else—such as thorough-bass, psychology, navigation and jiu-jitsu.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was during this same epoch that our Pasiphae became an enthusiast concerning the poetry of Sennacherib Stuff—one of the talented Sheer-Stuff family of writers. During his career, Stuff drew about him many of the Thinking New Women of America and of Great Britain. Sennacherib Stuff wrote only sonnets—mystic sonnets, of abysmal depth and of marvellous diction. At least so claimed Stuff's venerated. For proof, Stuff's sonnets were published in the best periodicals; as well as in whole, if little, volumes. To be sure, there were people who insisted that Stuff's sonnets were just—well, stuff—idiotic rubbish, pompous bosh, caricatures of Rossetti and such like; where few lines together, scarcely one line, had coherency. This world is full of the stupid and the jealous. At any rate, Pasiphae found for awhile a whole philosophy of life in Sennacherib's Stuff's "Cryptic Sonnets." There are more than two hundred of them. Perhaps I ought to cite three or four of them, just to show how eloquent and mystical they are. I borrow four from Stuff's famous "Artian Series," that Pasiphae specially revered. (By-the-bye, who was Artius?)

FATE'S REMEDY

THE Hours in concert sing: and languors cold
 Breed mists within my heart, and slay its blooms,
 And whirl in metric orbits through the fombs
 Of all that Was and Shall Be, as of old.
 Shall Be? Ah, yea, the Past shall smite mine eye,
 Through dumb jocundity, yea, dazzling dread!
 Shall Be! Most surely! Love has not unsaid
 That nothing is less vain than vanity.
 In that dear pledge I bathe my flint-braided feet,
 In that rich hope must I dank laurels wear;
 And (as in awful stress, great Artius bare
 His talismanic beaker, Dis to greet)
 So, friend, find life an "O!" Think, weep, upon it!
 Its jade-green eye stares at thee in this sonnet.

THE STAR-HELPERS

How ripe that hour when, thought rapt crystal-clear,
 We win ourselves—like Artius, breathing high!
 O lucent phantasms! Triumphant ye die
 While men exchange old faith for smiling fear.
 Courage then, ye who (mocked by thunder) sped
 Toward Minoæ, all blood-chartered! Find Truth nigh,
 Pacing before her prisons, not to die
 Ere gladsome guerdon grace the god's young head.
 Pause not, ye swill ones! Understand the Known,
 Even though no ruse its foolish lore indite!
 Ye have your consolation—"Self is Right,"
 To answer your deep riddle, grey as stone.
 Speller of these grim lines, their message take!
 "The Rose-branch and the Sword, alike they break!"

THE DOOM OF ARTIUS

BLIND, naked Nothingness, whose alien tread
 Bent down the lethal lilies in my field!
 —That field wherein Love toiled, that garth whose yield
 Of foolish flowers each May shall find more dread—

How shall I greet thee? Ah, should it be hate,
 A scarlet, thrice-wrought hate that should be mine?
 Hate grown so patient, by a love divine,
 That all who find it would God's joy abate!
 Speak to me, Oracle! Ope, livid lips,
 Dread eyes, inspired of anguish! Droop thy wing,
 Cull me each blasted bloom of suffering,
 Dank with the tears the stars weep in eclipse!
 Thought thickens in my Ego! Curdled dreams
 Draw round me, till all Being is but Seems.

FINALITY

A leaden falchion and a coward hand—
 A timorous heart, a poisoned trust toward all!
 Thou who couldst face with ecstasy thy fall
 —When hostile madness ravaged sea and land—
 Make me thy heir! Too long this road of time
 For my tired feet, O Artius! Shall one's pace
 Be music-measured in a bloody race?
 Shall scourge or rebeck teach us how to climb?
 The arrogant peaks toward desolation look—
 League beyond league of calcined barrenness;
 No path, no purpose—nothing save distress
 Of scanning what not eye nor heart can brook.
 Well, let me on! And with the Darkness come,
 Reach an abyss, cliff-edged—my journey's sum!

CHAPTER IX.

Some years passed for Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones and her interesting family—which always included Lady Sappho Sesame, with her young military relative, and various other adjutants. But, lo, one day a great longing to meet her nearest-to-legitimate husband, the Dook of Peto-Buster, came sweeping over our Pasiphae. After all,

in a way—they were married, she and Lord Peto-Buster. So Lord Peto came from Surinam promptly; without Willie Finocchio. Long ago, Willie had become an evangelical and moustached missionary-curate; he was now a gaitered bishop—really *in partibus*.

When Pasiphae and Lord Peto-Buster met, they smiled, shook hands, and agreed that the afternoon was rather damp for the season. Then they had hot tea and a bun, and plunged into a heart-to-heart talk—with more ‘oracular confession.’

They took a house near Regent’s Park, and lived happily. Lord Peto-Buster was as proud of Pasiphae, and of her six Heavenly Twins, as if he had known all about them. But alas! one unlucky day, Lady Sappho Sesame reminded Pasiphae that no Man can ever really understand a Woman; least of all, if truly a New Woman. Lady Sesame pointed out also that Pasiphae had lately shown strong tendencies to growing quieted-down, settled and fairly decently conducted—in short, was growing like the generality of human females—poor conventional creatures!

Pasiphae at once had terrible spasms of conscience. She felt that what Lady Sesame had stated was true. And yet so unnoticed by herself!

“Wretched I!” exclaimed Pasiphae, after she was brought back to consciousness, and to elocution, “What shall I do?... It is true!... My husband does not understand me. He never can understand me!... I have not been New-Womanly. On the contrary, I have been growing ridiculously Old-Feminine! I have ceased to be all that I was born to be—that is to say, if I consider my Intellect.”

So Pasiphae talked over her deplorable situation,

with Lord Peto-Buster. They sent the dear children to the local Sheltering Arms Asylum. Then, at Lord Peto-Buster's imperative insistence, Pasiphae gave her husband corrosive sublimate. She disposed of his body for the benefit of science.

Pasiphae was arraigned for murder. The judge gave a strongly unfavourable charge. The jurymen were inclined to acquit Pasiphae, because they could not conceive what kind of a statutory death was suitable to just that kind of New Woman. A gallows plainly was too good for her. She never could be kept quiet long enough for business by the electric chair! As for shooting her, that would only flatten good bullets for nothing, against her highly geological anatomy. So Pasiphae left the Court with a verdict of "Not Proven," which was converted by kind reportorial friends into "Without a stain on her character."

Somehow, this turn of affairs cruelly disappointed and irritated Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones. She took it morbidly. What she wanted exactly, would be hard to guess. For once, she herself did not seem to know, though she gave all her Mind to the subject. Pasiphae would not be pacified. She had lost faith in her Great Intellect! So—she decided to quit the world. Especially as our Pasiphae was now drawing along to an age when even a New Woman is in danger of being spoken of as an old woman. Yes, she would die! But oh, she would die in an original, intellectual, exceptional way—one that would be in keeping and—advertised. She seriously considered hanging herself in a Hall of Fame, by the aid of strips of

the big banner of New Womanhood that she had carried in the Suffragette Mob for smashing drapers' windows. But she could not manage that proceeding, because she had never learned to sew—nor even to tie a knot neatly.

She thought—a week. One could hear her Deep Intellect tick, so to to say, out in the passage. She came to a solution at last:

"Bring me a large yellow cucumber, full of seeds! I have thought of an asp, but that has been done awhile earlier, by somebody or other who wasn't a New Woman. I will be New, to the last gasp. Appendicitis is at least an up-to-date fatality."

One by one, she ate the seeds....

Her case proved to be a costly and awful one. Every individual seed must have taken effect. There were a dozen or more successive operations, which only a cast-iron, New-Womanish constitution could have supported. But Pasiphae was continually "rallying wonderfully," from one séance to another. Nevertheless, at last Pasiphae passed away, in philosophic agony—talking about protoplasm, and listening to two mechanical pianoforti that she had desired her friends to bring to her bedside, and to keep going—at the same time.

CHAPTER X.

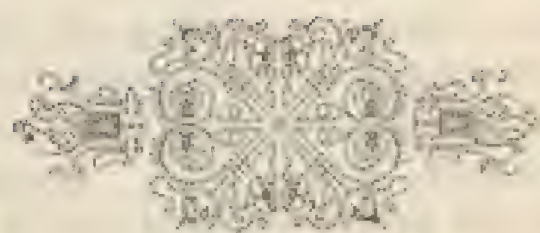
Pasiphae's last will and testament requested her executors to transport her remains to the Far East—to the top of a Tower of Silence. Or, as alternative, that she be shipped to the volcano of Kilauea. The vultures around the Tower persisted in letting Pasiphae—or ex-Pasiphae—strictly alone. So, after

awhile, the volcano was resorted to. Then occurred, at once, the worst explosion that Kilauea had offered within a generation. In spite of it, every shred of what had been lovely Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones was discovered, strewn about the crater—or the landscape; Pasiphae having been made of substances smash-proof, smoke-proof, fire-proof, boiling-water-proof, steam-proof, everything-proof—in short, indestructible.

So, after all, our marvellous Pasiphae was buried in an ordinary grave. Over it was erected a monument of the best—brass. On the monument was a handsome *alto rilievo*, presenting the fable of the Greek princess (of somewhat excessive temperament) whose name our Pasiphae bore, with such credit to a sex—whichever sex it was. Underneath the relief (some low people declared that a relief was indispensable—since to have Pasiphae Nenuphar Brinvilliers Pagan-Jones really dead and buried seemed such a relief) was this inscription:

PASIPHAË—A MARTYR.

GIFTED AND BEAUTIFUL, SHE IS NOW QUIESCENT.
TO THE INTELLECTUAL ALL THINGS ARE INTERESTING;
TO THE SUPERIOR ALL THINGS ARE ENNOBLING;
TO THE NEW WOMAN ALL THINGS ARE ESSAYABLE.



(TO WILLIAM DOUGLAS MOFFAT)

A GREAT PATIENCE. *

"... ONE VIRTUE—A GREAT PATIENCE." ... (*Henry VIII*)

I.

ARTHUR Sandroy's name hinted at his vaguely semitic-magyar origin, and at some such pristine spelling as "Artusz Szendrői." It was in May, 188—, with everything to mean successful flight from arrest as a most accomplished financial charlatan and swindler, that Arthur reached his refuge, New York; escaping from his London environment as a dishonoured and ruined man. Sandroy had betrayed his trusts—great trusts some of them; though most of such had been built up out of the savings of small depositors whose losses meant pitiful histories. He had lived expensively—showily. Little by little, came clandestine ventures with the uncertain capital of his house—Sandroy and Company, Bankers. Also he had contrived to dip into assets of the assurance-company to which his name had lately become an

* Portions of the thematic material in this sketch (from "Scribner's Monthly") and a few passages of the dialogue, much later were utilized in the author's novelette, "The Creditor." Otherwise the two narratives are independent in every essential.

attraction to provincial middle-class credulity. Quite two weeks before the end came, when every town-paper went into horrors over "so painful an example of blind confidence on the part of the public, and of perfidy in its victimizer," Arthur was hidden in comfortable lodgings, in Ashland Place, which you will reach by leaving the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad at Eighth Street, and walking west. His was probably the coolest mind of the many minds interested in his late transactions. He had a considerable sum in cash—enough, if carefully used, for some weeks of entire tranquility—externally; and, what was more, of a social invisibility that would not lack enjoyment.

As matters had gone, Sandroy had reason to believe that there was hardly a possibility of his being "looked for," in this part of the globe. Some special circumstances—including those confused by the suicide, on a steamer, of an unknown passenger—had decided Scotland Yard to condense abilities on two cities—Berlin and Paris. It was reckoned a certainty that Sandroy was hid either in one or the other town. He knew that. Yet despite all his sang-froid, he breathed ill as he stepped to the dock, when the great boat slid in. However, nothing happened there. Unchallenged, unnoticed, Arthur got his luggage atop of a cab, and himself into the vehicle. He was clean-shaven, for the first time since he had begun to raise his handsome beard. He was dressed like a clergyman, and passed as the Reverend Mason Paulet. Everything he had with him, from the contents of his boxes, to his visiting-cards and his letters, identified him as that

reverend gentleman—a missionary and social worker among the lower classes. Nobody—certainly not his own father, a most uncertain personage, as the reader already may have inferred—could have recognized Arthur. His strong, handsome face looked quite calmly out of the cab-windows, as he was driven up-town. He was a new man. ... Sandroy went to the house of an elderly Frenchman, in the calm neighbourhood named. He had had some correspondence for such purpose, when sundry unpleasant possibilities in London had begun to appear probabilities. Monsieur Danzat was expecting the Reverend Mr. Paulet. Two neat rooms were reserved for him. Both Danzat and his unsuspecting spouse understood that their guest had come on special philanthropic and ecclesiastical errands, that would keep him quiet at his writing-table, during most of his stay in America.

Settled in his new quarters, Sandroy felt, for the first time, a real reaction—physical and mental—allowed himself time to feel it. He tried to give himself a thorough rest; and he succeeded. There was no doubt that his present abode was safe, for a time yet open. After awhile, if things went well, he must, and he would, find something to do, to keep him going—some sort of work; of course under a pseudonym—in New York, or elsewhere in America. Or he might get to Mexico—to South America. For Sandroy was bent, audaciously, obstinately on a new career! A new career of even wide success. Nothing was further from his idea than that everything was over with him. Not so! Only he must wait bit.

Meantime, there in New York, supposed to be dead, but vividly alive, Sandroy proceeded to do much that seemed to him good. He read the papers attentively—the news about himself, and about the mischief that he had left behind him. But soon he read those things scarcely as closely as Balzac, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Schopenhauer, Cazanova, Zola. “I have time to read for pleasure, time to think for pleasure!” he declared to himself. “So I will just go back twenty years or so—to the pleasure I have lost.” His ingrained, semitic philosophy came to the front, with his aesthetic temperament.

Weeks passed. The newspapers dropped him. The sensation of his defection was past. The ship-suicide had been its *clou*. In London, many expert heads were straightening out practicalities. The authorities, it is true, nominally were keeping watch now for Sandroy, off in a couple of Western cities; in consequence of a rumour, without clear foundation, that Arthur had not been quite out of question the same Englishman as the suicide of the Algiers boat. But there were no conclusive contrary data; and, it was stated no particular expectations. Sandroy ate and drank, and soon slept well. He decided to begin a translation of a certain curious, amusing, decidedly equivocal work—in the category of erotika—which had as yet no English version: a pastime that—as he knew Italian thoroughly—he had had a fancy to take in hand, ever since he was nineteen. He made no suspicious efforts at secrecy. His goings-in and comings-out were open to his neighbours. He managed to see whatever he most cared about in the city. He was no nightfall-

skulker. He even went to concerts and theatres. He did not walk with his head bent down, nor avoid any man's glance. Many things, assuredly, he was careful to stay clear of—certain localities. But he kept himself from them with a feeling that bordered on the patronizing—as if he really would not have made such exceptions—it was merely rather convenient.

To understand how any man could be at once so philosophic and so material, you would have had to know Sandroy—if one could ever come to know Arthur. He was an odd *mélange*, first and last. He was amazingly practical, but also given to wide—very wide—interior deflections towards the aesthetic, the ideal. He had as clever (too clever?) a financial head, as ever had Jew or Gentile; or Jew-Gentile. He hated to harm physically anybody or anything, but had no particular moral conscience. His ideas of right and wrong were not Christian—nor even occidental. He had his own vague Decalogue. He thoroughly despised women, in his heart; but took vast pains, usually successful, to please them socially. He did not think women really worth loving; though his beauty and seductive manner waked in women interests that he mocked to himself. He was not troubled with nerves; but he perfectly understood weak nerves in other men. ... Most reticent of all his circle when awake, Nature had taken a specially ironical revenge by bestowing on him the unlucky—dangerous—weakness of talking rationally in his sleep; even to answering with detail questions put to him about his intimate affairs. Moreover, Sandroy was audacious in his independence of action, yet a half-fatalist. He would go so far, but no step

farther ; not even by conduct in his present scrape. If, for example, he was to be caught—well and good, he would be caught. It was a business of destiny. He swore he would not make himself uncomfortable beyond a fixed degree. His luck was his luck ! It had but once deserted him in great things. His star—he would abide by it ! It would shine again, in the West, if not in the East !

II.

Now, Sandroy's fatalistic or other ideas might fortify him against thinking much about the police of the globe. But every now and then vividly recurred to him the recollection of one man, as well as of one woman. Of the woman, it is not necessary to speak much at present. Enough to state that Sandroy had been her husband for a short time. The man was Oliver Anisdell, of Eugénie Terrace, S. W.

Everything that Sandroy had been for good and for credit, or that he might have been he owed to Oliver's father, Colonel Clarence Anisdell ; who, with one son already on his hands, had adopted Sandroy, a stranger-lad, out in India—abused and beaten by a certain Clade, a bibulous corporal. It was an odd circumstance. Everybody at Gurrahabad smiled discreetly about it at the time—at least the army-men did so ; though such initial chapter soon ceased to be spoken of, or generally known ; indeed was well-nigh wholly forgotten while the two lads grew up. One day, the Colonel was drowsing in his bungalow, when came the idea that something particular, in which young Oliver was concerned, was in progress, out in the compound.

He started to the door, to see his son and heir prone on the ground. A strange lad was standing belligerently over him. Oliver rose—squared; whereupon the unknown boy promptly knocked Oliver down again.

"Holloa there, you young rascal!" shouted the Colonel, making a dive for the pugilist, in whom he recognized a remarkably handsome lad, part English, part oriental in type, and vaguely connected with Corporal Clade's bachelor-existence—a boy belonging to that humble neighbor, in a sort. "What the devil do you mean by assaulting my boy, in that style? Get away from him, I say!... And you, Noll, do you get up there, this instant!"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I'm only doing just what I was asked to do. Exactly what he wanted," remonstrated Corporal Clade's protégé, coolly folding his arms and smiling—with a smile as charming as his voice.

Now, Colonel Anisdell, a widower since his few years of a marriage, long back, was a kind-natured man; one still almost young. He was a great lover of youth; easily won by sundry such traits as Oliver's antagonist presented, at quite first sight.

"Wanted?" the colonel asked sharply, but more in surprise. "Asked you to do? Do you know that you have more than a pennyworth of impudence? Do you mean wanted—or needed?" he added, in a glum after-thought. Oliver meantime stood in abashed silence.

"Both, sir, I think," replied young Sandroy. "You see, we were talking, and he asked me—this was a day or so ago, sir—what I thought about him; and I told him he was a pretty nice chap,

but that he wanted pluck. And he said how should he get it? I told him that to box was about as good a way as any; and that, if he liked, I would try to lick him, every day this week. So we went at it. I told him that the harder I licked him, or tried to, the better—to bring out any stuff that there was in him, you know. We began to-day. So I've just knocked him down--twice. I'm awfully sorry, Anisdell." Sandroy concluded, turning to his opponent, and helping him to right himself; "What could I do? You told me to try it on—you did—as hard as ever I could! You'll hold out better to-morrow. See if you don't."

Colonel Anisdell had some work to keep his countenance composed during this explanation. He turned to Oliver. "Olly, is this a fact?" he demanded quizzically. The contrast between the two boys as they stood there, side by side, was marked. Indeed, the Colonel then and there felt—on the one hand admiringly, on the other hand painfully—how unlike the two were! Oliver Anisdell, at sixteen, was plain-featured, clumsy, and slow of nature. He had an obscure, negative, rather feminine temperament. He made no friends, and so was much alone. He was shy of girls, and ungracious with his own sex. Soldiering was not at all plain in his making-up. All these deficiencies and numerous others, in Oliver as a lad of the Service, so to say, with a grandfather and great-grandfather who had been attractive men and notable soldiers, increasingly annoyed the Colonel. "Inherits from his mother—not from his father!"—was wont to sigh to himself the disappointed Colonel Anisdell.

But to return. Oliver admitted, unqualifiedly, that the facts were as stated. "And," he observed, shaking hands with Sandroy—"like a gentleman," as the Colonel described it, at mess—"he's quite right! I *do* want pluck. If I can get it out of him, why, I will!... I don't mind his knocking me down to-day. I didn't bellow at that. I turned my ankle a bit."

"By the Lord!" ejaculated Colonel Anisdell, "I believe I spy a change in you, Olly; one for the better! If it's the result of your present schooling, I think you'd best tutor awhile under the same system. Perhaps *miles non nascitur sed fit*," he parodied musingly. The idea of helping Oliver to a regular companion of his own age, and who might develop dormant good qualities, more than once lately had entered this father's mind. He stood looking at the pair of lads, in a sudden abstraction. Then, deciding that he would do well to know Sandroy's name and address, and all about the boy that he could learn from him, he told Olly that tea was ready, and bade Arthur come along. During the hour that followed, the Colonel was surprised and delighted by some social aspects of the stranger-lad—his almost inexplicable good manners—gentlemanly demeanour, maturity and quick wits. Next morning, the Colonel sent for Corporal Clade. Clade told how he had drifted into—nominally—being Sandroy's guardian. The lad had been born, out of wedlock, to a sort of cousin of Clade, and to her—exotic—Soho admirer. Both parents were dead. The lad had lived by his wits, not a little—in by-ways of London, but apparently not a bit

to his harm by that varied and risky education. He was a "d—n good boy, as well as a beauty, sure!" Clade declared.

Colonel Anisdell came from that talk doing more than just meditate on it—calculate—weigh pro and contra. That month, Corporal Clade died of enteric. The Colonel cast his die. Sandroy became thenceforth practically Oliver's adopted companion—in a way to become, to all intents and purposes, an adopted brother, as will be seen anon.

They grew up friends more than are many brothers, those two so capriciously assorted. The days of the knocking-down lessons soon lay far behind them. Oliver drew from Sandroy certainly as much as the Colonel had expected, or at least had hoped. He would never be able—alas!—to see in his son half the physical attractiveness, the intelligence, the social address of Sandroy; but Arthur certainly had a valuable influence on Olly, externally and more. They were always together at Gurrahabad; their local life absolutely in common. Colonel Anisdell was enchanted with his experiment. Sandroy was a delight to him. Any other background save that of the Anisdells' home faded out of Arthur's mind and existence. As to the two, if considered as in free exchange—day to day—psychically, Oliver by the contact gained at least some clearer manliness, physical power, and address. Also he lost his moodiness and sudden nervous storms, his suppressed betrayals of illogical sentimentalism—as to some aspects of life; and he picked up the art of better meeting men as they came. But Sandroy? On his side, what did he get? Nothing

psychic, not he!—unless deep self-confidence, the consciousness that he was superior to most men; since, in one way or another, he could influence almost everybody whom he encountered.

They did not stay long in India, or in the army-atmosphere. Colonel Anisdell sent the boys to England to school; retired presently; settled in a country-town. Oliver did not become a soldier.

So past some years for the two friends, and for Colonel Anisdell—obviously growing older. And so became definite an aspect of the Colonel's attitude toward "my two boys"—an attitude not so agreeable to portray, but of—shall not one say it?—tragic importance. Probably the Colonel was fond of his son. But it was evident, however paternal *au cœur* was his sentiment for Oliver, that his pride, his affection, solicitude, dependence as to Sandroy were enormous. Oliver never complained of his father's partiality; never appeared conscious of how the Colonel's heart and life leaned towards Sandroy. But Oliver felt it, day by day; deeply, helplessly. People observed it, talked of it, behind the three backs. After all, it was no wonder. Oliver was now an uninteresting, plain, nervous, silent-mannered fellow—with few friends—no gifts. Arthur was all the opposite; and, besides, he was already an astute, politic, diplomatic young man, that London stockholders and banking-people talked of, almost as soon as—without any help from Colonel Anisdell, and indeed much to his patron's surprise—he found a niche for himself—in finance, in the City.

So began Arthur's career. He seemed one of the new men born to bend original energies in

original schemes. In a few years, his name was well-known in the town's respectful—and other—comment and admiration. He made useful friends, he pleased them with shrewd *coups de Bourse* he succeeded in everything. He started in for himself—as “Sandroy & Co.” Who was—were—the “company”? That detail was vague: but Arthur was everywhere spoken of a man as mysteriously “well-supported.” He got into much good society, even the decidedly aristocratic levels—Oliver with him.

All this time, Oliver was attaining neither business-credit, nor social mark. He had not head for the one; not *prestance* for the other. He followed in Arthur's shining wake. He was a colourless conversationalist. He danced worse than most Englishmen. He was notably a nuisance at sports. He rode ill, and was so poor a shot (especially as he had a serious defect of vision) that he gave up shooting as an irritation to himself and a danger to others. He played cards fairly well—not better. He was, in short, an accepted inconsequent.

Hence, concentrated on Arthur Sandroy, the old Colonel looked to him, consulted him—adored him. So did Oliver? Well, Oliver never showed a shade of jealousy, although those few who knew the history of Sandroy's adventitious entrance into Anisdell's connection, men who observed Arthur's supersession, wondered if things always were so miraculously smooth under that roof. The Colonel cared for his son? Doubtless; but surely he was in his undemonstrative way, a worshipper of Sandroy. He was growing old, how would it end? One day it ended. That is to say, the Colonel died. He left

by his will one-third of his fortune to Oliver, and two-thirds—a large two-thirds—to Arthur Sandroy, “my beloved adoptive son.” People said it was an outrageous will. Perhaps people were right.

Whether the gossipers were right or not, there was one individual closely concerned in their talk, who did not give them satisfaction of hearing ill opinions of the matter. There was no *caveat* filed against the Colonel's will. Oliver Anisdell accepted the portion of goods—not very great—that fell to him, without a word of displeasure to solicitors, nor to Sandroy; nor to anybody. He and Arthur were seen riding and driving together every fine day. A little before the old Colonel's death, Sandroy had set up a neat bachelor-establishment, down Brompton way. He could well afford to do it with the income he was making; it was done quite with the Colonel's approval of the step. Oliver was met there, with other guests, now as before. When some kind friend came to Anisdell at the club, and began sympathizing with him over what he called “such an extraordinary injustice, my dear Anisdell,” Oliver opened his brown eyes wide, and said, “Sir?”, to the sympathizing friend, so energetically that he beat an apologetic retreat. As for Sandroy, after the will, he said a little more than Oliver; but not a great deal. He confessed he was surprised at Colonel Anisdell's fortune and liberality. “It was not necessary.” He “could not venture to criticize the will; but—well—yes, it had been disconcertingly partial” to him. He “hardly dared say it of one so kind to him as the old Colonel, but the dispositions seemed a bit unkind to Oliver.” If Oliver had not “been

such a capital fellow, or if he, Sandroy, had been in Oliver's place, he "might have objected personally—and legally." But then "Oliver was a man out of ten thousand in feelings, and their life-long affection was great." And Oliver "would in no case lose by the affair—against *that*, great care would be taken "... Also somehow was soon circulated the report—statement—that to both the dead Colonel and to Sandroy, jointly, Oliver had owed a large sum—something of that sort... In any case, Arthur "was sorry;" but really, if he and Oliver could stand it, and they certainly could, it was nobody's else's concern. Besides, just then Sandroy was too absorbed in large business-affairs to bother over the matter. Lately he had large interests at issue; and had been "making a great deal of money, some of it for Oliver."

Perhaps Arthur's manner of alluding to the will was not altogether assumed. He *had* a great deal on hand just then. Anyhow the talk of the will lapsed.

Some years passed. The two men were intimate as ever. Sandroy managed all Oliver's financial matters. Moreover as to Oliver's income, Arthur had doubled it again; so any testamentary deficiency had been atoned for. Sandroy's bank was much in the public eye. Criticism of his speculative tendencies ceased. To be sure, some city-firms obstinately avoided all important dealings with Sandroy and Company; never really accepted Arthur as quite safe. But many houses were most cordial. In smart society, too, the history was much the same. There were not a few doors into which Arthur

never succeeded in penetrating. His very good looks, his oriental charm, something "too foreign"—they displeased. Vague, untrue tales of how he came to be, so to say, an Anisdell ("Mr. Anisdell-Sandroy," as he was much called) circulated, to his prejudice. Still, of smart life he had enough, and to spare.

Neither man was married. They were both in the thirties. The brothers—for so they had called themselves in boyhood, and so they now called each other, continued to drive in the park—to be seen in drawing-rooms, in company, as at the opera and club. Oliver never spoke of Sandroy without the best words, if few, and as though moved by those undercurrents of affection and good-understanding that keen observers can detect in the speech of two individuals so circumstanced—or mark as absent.

They went out a great deal, though not by any means always in the same sets. It is to be mentioned that they "went out" also in certain paths of a society far from high, and farther still from the highly moral; but in which, in common confidentially, they found occasional amusement... One evening, at a dinner-party, a lady who sat beside Oliver chid the young man for not attending to her anecdote, and for following instead, with searching eyes, his brother's supple figure, as Sandroy crossed the floor, to speak to a guest.

"On my word, Mr. Anisdell," said Lady Warby, "I believe you think more of that amazingly clever brevet-brother of yours than of anything else in the wide world!"

"You are quite right, Lady Warby," replied Oliver, "quite right. I—I—really believe I do think

more of Arty than of anyone living! He has given me cause to think a lot—about him—all my life. Besides—well, you know—he's really a wonderful man."

"You are so charmingly sentimental, Mr. Anisdell—so truly fraternal!" returned Lady Warby. Arthur came up, and no more was said.

Now, the lady to whom on this very evening, Arthur Sandroy had crossed the carpet, to say something, was the very same one over whom within three months, her social circle and other sets were discreetly agitated; Lady Warby's second-cousin, the beautiful Mrs Heriot, a widow from Ireland; a widow bewitching one withal. The agitation was the question of whether Oliver Anisdell or Arthur Sandroy was to become her husband. For the second time, the persistently cordial, fraternal, mysterious concord between these two men, no longer so young as at the time of the will-perplexity, came into eager comment; but defied suspicious scrutiny, and seemed to defy any unkind social rivalry. Sandroy and Anisdell had conspicuous positions nowadays, so far as several circles counted; not a movement of either, particularly of Sandroy could be made in a corner.

In the case of Oliver, as gradually showing his partiality for Mrs. Heriot, was concurrent the fact that Oliver never before then had displayed the least disposition to be impressed sentimentally with any woman, were she married or single, older or younger, beautiful or clever or popular or charming or what else. Never. In vain had such—or the alert mamas—tried to enlist Oliver's interest; as an excellent, if

not sympathetic, *parti*. Oliver remained cold to all charms and maneuvers. He had become recognised as a man who though not all a woman-hater, in the social sense of that ugly reproach, concentrated his personal life on men-friends—a small group of such; besides being devoted to his life-long relation to Sandroy. But, as so often happens, Oliver's heart suddenly was set beating, at last, for that delightful lady—Mrs. Heriot. And Mrs. Heriot seemed entirely in accord with Oliver's attentions and hopes; till, having been absent from London during the early season, Sandroy came on the scene.

Arthur's conservative attitude towards the fair sex had always been quite different from the open apathy of Oliver. Sandroy knew how useful were female-suffrages in his favour; that is to say, in a drawing-room sense, a boudoir sense, a five-o'clock tea sense; in town or country circumstances—at ball, dinner, house-party, fashionable bazaar. He made a point of pleasing women. How far Sandroy took true pleasure in pleasing so, or in being pleased—well, that is not important to discuss here; the intricate, whys and wherefores can be passed over. But Sandroy, like Anisdell, had never paid marked and individual attention to any woman in his social orbits, till Mrs. Heriot, like a new planet, swam into his ken. And by unlucky coincidence, exactly Mrs. Heriot was the Venus of Oliver Anisdell's sudden interest in such astronomy! Could anything chance more awkwardly for all three parties most concerned?

Mrs. Heriot was reckoned a very rich woman. Perhaps that had something to do with Sandroy's

sudden *concurrence*—in the French sense of the substantive—with his adoptive brother. Mrs. Heriot's family and interests were Canadian; and in Montreal precisely, Arthur had been making the business-absence referred to above, returning to London when Oliver's closely interested attitude to Mrs. Heriot was decisive and most talked of. Arthur certainly took pains to be presented to Mrs. Heriot promptly. He pleased the pretty Canadian, and soon was her *dévoué*, to the vivid observance of many gossips.

Now to disclose a truth, one of importance after awhile, Mrs. Heriot was not a rich woman. Her income largely was due to sources that (though she preferred not to let it be known clearly to even her relatives, the Warby connection) she could not control; investments lately much reduced in safety and in productivity; and several for her life only. But this little secret was for Mrs. Heriot—and some discreet Canada solicitors.

So began the unconfessed rivalry, serious or trivial, between Oliver and Arthur. Oliver had the start, by some weeks; but he was a tortoise, as compared with a hare; a tortoise likely not to win the race. Probably not a word of their mutual situation—not one—ever passed between them. Mrs. Heriot was never spoken of between the two men—save casually, briefly—never with any sentimental suggestion, never with any inflection of special interest. But, of course, each man must have observed the other vigilantly, as to every outward detail of gallantry. Moreover much of their social attention to Mrs. Heriot was—almost—in company of each other! How people did talk!—especially

of that last queerly dual aspect! If Oliver was chief partner to Mrs. Heriot at a ball, on Tuesday night, and rode by her side next morning, her escort was Sandroy at the evening's dinner; and he sat by her in the Warby box, all through the opera. It was see-saw in everything. Nevertheless, if they were together, hovering around Mrs. Heriot, she had two strings to her bow that never vibrated dissonance.

People began to feel out of patience. This good feeling was abnormal. But in commenting on Oliver's fraternal pose, they railed at Anisdell in particular; declared that he lacked spirit; did not take a proper pride in himself. As to Mrs. Heriot, she was a lively woman, but her *confidantes* were few, and her confidences fewer. Lady Warby said that "it was simply like unlocking a door without a key, to draw a syllable out of Joan on *that* matter"—and Lady Warby ought to have known; for she attacked the lock, and even tried to see through the keyhole, often enough!

But a solution, in part, of this problem came unexpectedly. It would have been hard to find a more interesting solution. On the evening of Lady Warby's annual *musical*, Mrs. Heriot quietly mentioned to her hostess, just before leaving, that she had accepted matrimonially Mr. Arthur Sandroy; and was ready to allow that interesting piece of information to be promulgated as soon as ever Lady Warby chose.

"And—and—" stammered Lady Warby, who, in spite of her rapturous surprise at getting hold of this news for publication, was determined to obtain what more remained as an integral part of it, and

solicitude to everybody—" and you have refused Mr. Anisdell, Joan ? "

" I have refused Mr. Anisdell," replied Mrs. Heriot, after a brief hesitation. " I certainly could not be expected to accept them both—could I ? No, I can't wait for any more questions to-night. Remember, Clara, I have said that you *may* mention the fact—if you like."

If Lady Warby liked ? In gratitude, bewilderment and delight, over permission and secret, she hurried to find Lord Warby. Near the top of the stairs, whom should she meet but Oliver, just arrived. Salutations followed. Then—

" This is—this is a great piece of news I have just heard—that Joan Heriot is engaged to Mr. Sandroy," she began abruptly, but courageously.

Oliver smiled placidly, calm to her scrutiny.

" Ah, she has told you ? " he returned, " It's not news to me. It couldn't be that, you know—this long time. They settled it on Wednesday. I'm glad for them—but specially glad for myself—I stop playing their gooseberry. Chaperonage for you women must be tiresome ; but it's nothing to a man's being buffer against a town's knowing just the status of another fellow's love-making ! One—one—feels like some kind of—of—well, promoter in such little affairs, and he don't get any shares as payment."

With which Anisdell proceeded his way. He soon reappeared—chatted unconcernedly with this or that group, being the man in the room that everybody furtively stared at the hardest ; for Sandroy was not among the evening's guests, as yet.

Two or three ventured to speak to Oliver about the announcement. He made the most amiable of comments, in a conventional, unemotional way—"Mrs. Heriot and Sandroy were made for one another." Also he mentioned particularly that he hoped the marriage would not be far distant of date; though of course he could say nothing positive as to that—for he was "going, within a fortnight, to the Norway coast, on a yachting-tour of some months." Generally speaking, Oliver behaved as if he had never paid Mrs. Heriot all that special attention, which had been love's labour lost, thanks to the success of his brilliant rival.

"I must confess I should like to see with my own eyes how he feels towards Sandroy!" Lady Warby thought. At twelve o'clock, arrived Arthur. The covert interest of the watch-ful waited on the two, as Sandroy was seen approaching Oliver. Some looked at the victor, some at the vanquished. The interest, naturally, rather centered on Anisdell. But those who expected the bread of something more to talk over, got but a stone. No manifestation took place. Oliver stretched out his hand, and touched Arthur's sleeve, as Sandroy passed. Excusing himself to his partner, he said something to Sandroy, in a very low voice. It seemed to amuse both men. Nobody could hear it; though I dare not say that some did not try. Sandroy's acquaintances began to congratulate him. He received the polite phrases gracefully. Meantime the beaten rival, to whom such a civility should have been quite intolerable, stood near Arthur, in bland good humour. It is hardly needful to say that no allusions to Oliver's

defeat were made to him, even by the hardest. The line was drawn there! Besides, Lady Warby kept that part of her news almost entirely to herself. She compassionated an old acquaintance, little as he seemed to need it.

The last seen or heard of the pair that night was Anisdell standing beside his cab, and slowly saying—most pleasantly—to Sandroy, "Get in old man—I'll set you down." And so the two inexplicables drove off.

"Theodore!" asked Lady Warby, as she entered her own room, with her husband, the evening over, "did you ever hear of a man being supplanted once, twice and away, like Oliver Anisdell—and behaving so? Talk of fraternal regard!"

"Oh, bother fraternal regard!" ejaculated Lord Warby, laughing. "If a man can't feel, of course he can't resent, Clara!"

"What do you mean by that, please?" demanded Lady Warby,

"Nothing," responded Warby drily. "You must talk to Joan herself, about her engagement. Apply to Joan, my dear girl. Not to me, I beg."

The Warby *musical* was Oliver Anisdell's last appearance at any entertainment that year. He left the city two days later, instead of on the remoter date he had mentioned; going with his friend Craig to Stockholm, where they would hang about till the yacht came. Furthermore, Oliver did not return to England in the autumn. He decided to go for the winter to the Riviera, starting from Berlin, where he found himself in November.

Meantime, unexpectedly as to season, occurred

the Sandroy-Heriot marriage. It did not take place in London. Also it was a very quiet affair. Just as it was being planned out as an 'event,' died Mrs. Heriot's father, who had long been an invalid, in a Canadian sanatorium. Anisdell was in Tunis. He did not come to the wedding. A handsome present bore his card. During this trip, as in others, Arthur seldom heard from Oliver. His absence, and Arthur's new domestic life, were acting more and more as a solvent in intimacy, even such by post. Besides, Oliver hated letter writing. His address was now vague—or at least his whereabouts.

The winter was spent by the Sandroys in an hotel-suite—till they should take a house, as was said. They seemed very happy. But soon came sad news to their friends. Mrs. Sandroy died, in her first *accouchement*; the little child also not surviving. Sandroy's matrimonial experience had been tragically short.

He was not seen socially anywhere that season—of course not. In its passage, Anisdell returned to England. He and Arthur, so far as was known, met again, and were on perfectly good terms. But they seemed not nearly as intimate as formerly; besides which Oliver was away from England often.

That midwinter came sudden financial stress in the City. Several good concerns, many bad, suffered. The situation did not smooth quickly; a general distrust gained. There were rumours unfavourable to Sandroy & Co. Such rumours were contemptuously denied by Sandroy and his intimates. Arthur did no borrowing. Oliver Anisdell went down to Farnham, to Arthur's new place there, one Sunday afternoon, rather late, in much uneasiness of mind;

coming expressly to find Arthur alone, and to learn from his own lips whether affairs were yet ominous. For Oliver's money was still practically all in Sandroy & Company.

The two men had not passed an evening together so, in a long time. Arthur completely reassured Oliver. "Everything was absolutely smooth."... He urged Oliver to stay all night; which Oliver did, as a nasty storm had come on. Next morning, they both went up to town. Anisdell was to leave for a longer journey than ever this time; for he was going to the Far East, and so around the world, by Japan and the States; sailing on the following Wednesday. Hence his wishing to be quite at ease about all his finances.

Not many weeks after Oliver's departure, and when nobody expected any further chapter of the financial unrest, Sandroy & Company went to pieces. The rottenness of its affairs, its fraudulent doings to stave off ruin, Sandroy's conscienceless proceedings during a long time—all were brought to light. Never was a hollow house more trickily conducted. Many who had trusted to its unscrupulous, criminal head—indeed there was no partner demonstrable—lost largely. Some were ruined. Among them was Oliver Anisdell, unless all evidences were wrong. Where Oliver was at the time, nobody knew definitely.

Arthur Sandroy undoubtedly was also ruined. But he was not to be found. The plans he had laid for escape—weeks ahead—were quite sufficient. The coincidence mentioned, a sea-suicide was of vast use. And so Arthur, almost at once, was lucky enough

to be mentioned in all circles interested, as a dead absconder, who had jumped into the sea; doing so the thing he could really do best—to end an elusive and mischievous career.

III.

Such was the earlier history of Arthur Sandroy and Oliver Anisdell; such the status of affairs that Sandroy, by his clever flight, had left behind him. Not every criminal optimist can resolutely refuse to think his career ended by the shipwreck—moral, social, financial—of such a past; and at the same time, philosophically considering it, can persuade himself that he has not much to do with it. Now Sandroy felt personally towards most of those people who had trusted him so fully, so unfortunately—the City-men, social acquaintances, women with money to place—well, I do not know whether in all his life, that is, in such portions of it as expressed life to him, in which he knew his real Ego constantly brought into play—Arthur felt anything, or felt *for* anybody, with strong altruism. Perhaps the reader will have guessed that fact.

But his reflections occasionally extended most definitely, as well they might, to Oliver Anisdell. To Oliver Anisdell, far away somewhere; perhaps not even now aware of all that had happened—for Oliver was fond of unfrequented by-places, often sitting off, during weeks, all letters and telegrams waiting at a bank. Oliver likely had little more money in the world than by his letter of credit. Oliver was incapable of making money. Still, what could one do next now for Oliver? Nothing. There was no use,

only complication and danger, in letting Oliver know that the suicide-story was an error, and in giving Oliver any clue to the New York flight and refuge. No, far better not! Perhaps after months, years—when the star of Sandroy had guided him afar, in a new land, in some new career?... There must be no compromises—now—with the past! Not even that one! To look back was the first error. A time of rest, as far as possible an evanishment—reflection, scheming, here in this retreat—those were the first exigencies. To whatever they were prelude, why, time and prudence and good luck would show that!

Still, as Sandroy recalled Anisdell's predicament and his worried queries, so positively put by, in that talk at Farnham, and also allowed other remembrances of Oliver to cross his mind, Arthur's train of thought, as he sat alone there in his New York hiding-place, that early July evening, concentrated uncommonly on Oliver. What could Oliver do? How could Oliver live? What would become of Oliver? Would they ever ever meet again? Even were Arthur to be ready to repay Oliver at least some part of his losses?—which, to do Arthur justice, he certainly hoped to make good, no matter who else never could be paid...

"I wish I might have helped letting him in for the extra eleven thousand, that the "Post" talks about to-night!... But—well, why should I have specialized him, more than other men? He'll scrape up enough somewhere—somehow—to keep the wolf from the door. I dare say, at this moment he's more upset by my jumping off that boat, than by what I've dropped for him... Ah, Ollie, Ollie! my dear, old patient sentimentalist! A pretty sound sort of nature

—of its type—for these days !... The question is, has the world clear functions for that type of man, in this stage of social progression—of social retrogression?"

It was the fourth of July. A warm night, but one perhaps not normally hot, hung over the great American metropolis. As the reader may know, and perhaps may remember with a mild terror, the "Fourth" is the great national anniversary of that country in which Arthur was a refugee; an occasion annually celebrated with a brutal noisiness quite unparalleled anywhere else on the face of the globe, by way of every known explosive and dynamic device, harmless or dangerous, that is yet current. "Squibs," were popping off in the streets, by thousands. Fire-crackers that sounded like young bombs, exploded at near intervals. Pistols, even small cannon, had their full patriotic share. All day long, this kind of thing had been going on in the city, as in its suburbs; in every city, in all suburbs of the land, in joyous outrageousness. Though night could be expected to modify the racket, particularly if fireworks were to be general, still, detonations of all kinds would be lively till midnight and after, in the town and all about it—the glorious and deafening "Fourth!" Arthur's rooms, luckily, were at the back of the Dauzat's house. An old public building, with its appurtenances, stretched in face of two of his windows, offering somewhat of a buffer between Arthur's quarters and what sounded like a fusillade, bombardment, in the streets. Occasionally a sharp, loud report of some kind, perhaps followed by distant hurrahs, startled him; but he had become wonted to noises by a day of them. Occasionally

a rocket flashed against the sky. It was yet early in the evening.

Arthur had been going over his present resources—decidedly personal finances. They were not too satisfactory. Money slipped away soon, in even such economic exile. What would he find to do? What dare to seek?—under some new pseudonymity. Also—where? In New York, or in another city? Difficult matters to plan... Well, he would hush away those worries to-night! He took up the manuscript of his translation of Capanna's famous "*I Diversi Divertimenti del Divino Diadumeno*"—Venice, 1590. As he pushed back a small copy of Shakespeare, it opened where he had been reading. By coincidence, the passage was that profoundly sombre one—so pregnant of disaster, solitude and defeat!—where Antony cries out, in Alexandria:

"Hark, the land bids me tread no more upon't;
It is ashamed to bear me.
I am so lated in the world that I
Have lost my way for ever. I have a ship
Laden with gold...
I have fled myself, and have instructed cowards
To run and show their shoulders. Friends, be gone;
I have myself resolved upon a course
Which has no need of you..."

His lip curled. Save that he did not consider his "way" as "lost" or not lost for long time, and that he had no ship laden with gold—worse luck!—those lines did not wholly misapply to his situation.

He took up his pen; and just then came a knock at the door. He expected Madame Dauzat.

He got up to admit her, with his linen. But it was not she. By an oversight, the door had not been locked. It opened and shut softly, swiftly. Startled a little, Arthur leaned forward and looked toward the passage, shading his face from the drop-light. Oliver Anisdell, who had shut the door behind him—turning the key in it—came toward Arthur.

Sandroy leaped up. Oliver laid his finger on his lips. He pointed with the other hand to the door. Oliver's face was haggard. His eyes—how strange his eyes were! And his colour! Or was it only travel-tan, or the excitement of the moment? Plainly Oliver understood the need of caution here. He said loudly, "Good evening, Mr. Paulet!"

Sandroy grasped the table, to steady himself in his amazement and a vague dread. Then, equally audibly, came from him, "I am happy to see you, sir!" Under his breath, with a bewildered accent, he exclaimed, "By God, Olly! How—*how* did you come here?"

Anisdell returned more softly, "At any rate, here I am. Very much here."

Arthur mechanically pointed to a chair. "In the name of all that is possible, where did you come from? How did you find me?"

"I came from the Philippines. Or rather, direct from the Pacific Coast," replied Anisdell. "I arrived here this evening."

"But—but—what gave you a hint—in heaven's name, even a hint!—that—that I was here? In this country—this place—this house?" questioned Arthur. "You know what may mean the fact that even you should trace me! And that name!... Sit down, Olly, sit down! I must know everything, at once!"

Oliver sat down. "Don't be afraid of other people. You forget your old trick? It's a bad one—sometimes. You talked in your sleep, that night—"

"Yes—go on. That night at Farnham?"

"Yes. But I didn't think out the connection till long, long afterward. I was d—d stupid—as usual! You were asleep. You told me about writing to these French people here—in New York. You gave me street and number. Oh, I asked you? I wrote it all down, too. I ought to have guessed what you meant by it. But you woke up before I could pump you any more. You know what you'd said to me—awake?—you made me believe that Sandroy & Company were all right. You seemed to have no fears. But—"

"Wait, Olly! Did anybody meet you—see you coming up here?"

"Not a soul, as far as I know. I made a guess at your rooms. The house isn't big—the other rooms seem empty. I just came straight up, from the street."

"Why didn't you write me what you knew about me? That you were coming?"

"No particular use in that. And dangerous, if a letter fell into outside hands."

"You didn't believe then that I was the "Prinz Wolfram" fellow? The suicide?"

"For a bit, yes—certainly. But pretty soon I said, "No—not like Arty! He's alive enough! And then I said, "By G—d! I know where to look for Arty alive—no matter who else don't! As you see—as you see."

"When did you get to know about the smash—Sandroy and Company? As soon as it was in the papers, over your way?"

"No—a good lot later. My mail was piled up—weeks of it."

Then was a short silence. Arthur was quite composed again. But a difficult evening surely was ahead, one much more exciting to his nerves than merely Fourth of July uproar outside. For Arthur observed more clearly how unlike any former self appeared Oliver. Oliver was evidently labouring under strong—if curiously self-contained—agitation, verily! But besides that—what?

Presently Oliver said abruptly, as if continuing his thought—"So you see nobody is in the secret of my coming here. No harm done to you. It's just a caller—if anybody notices—I've left all my luggage at the railway-station—I wanted to be sure if you were here. That's smooth enough."

"Yes—of course." Again a break in the dialogue; Arthur immoveable, and the only sounds being from the celebrators outside.

"Look here, Arty," Anisdell suddenly began, "I know you've had cause to keep the outlook of Sandroy & Company to yourself, from most people. But, all the same, why didn't you take me into your confidence? Just a bit? Enough to keep me in England?... Yes, your confidence. I don't suppose you could protect my interests much. I couldn't expect to know all the affair? But at least as to where you proposed to get to—for awhile—?"

"What was the use, my dear Olly? It was all part of the same business. And certainly before we talk of anything else, that one first thing, as to yourself. If I could have helped matters for you anyhow, saved you to any extent, I would have done so. You can believe

that, Olly. But it was too late. My God—I am sorry, so sorry ! ”

“ Sorry ? What for ? Oh, for my going to pieces so, along with all the rest ? H’m—I don’t know why I should be better treated out than other people. I’ve lots of high company ! You took care of that. You see the papers, I suppose ? There’s this new mess about the Balu River shares, as *not* in the available assets of Sandroy & Co. It means about eleven thousand—as far as I am concerned. Funny.”

Sandroy had been noting the tone of Anisdell’s voice ; *that* something peculiar in the expression of his face. The odd light still gleamed in his eyes. Nevertheless, Arthur could not decide what struck him as singular in Oliver’s manner. However, even in the situation as surprising and in apprehension of discovery as near, in spite of his plans, Arthur was now fairly self-possessed. He was apparently ready to “ talk business ” to Oliver all night.

“ The Balu ? Oh, yes, I know. But everything is chaos yet. You’ll see. You must wait a little, Olly. You may not come out badly. No, indeed ! ”

“ Do you *really* think that ? ” said Oliver with a scornful gesture. “ I don’t. And I don’t believe you believe it either ! Come now, Arty ! ”

Arthur began low but decided protests, and rapid, summary specious explanations.

Oliver hearkened, curiously *distract* ; sometimes looking vaguely around the room—listening more to the dulled explosions of Yankee jubinations from the streets than to Arthur—apparently.

“ ... One thing, however,” continued Arthur, “ they will never see *me* again ! And you are the sole person,

Olly, out of all those crowds and days, that I expect ever to lay eyes on, to keep along with; wherever and to whomsoever my star will let me turn next. And I won't try to give *you* the slip again, old man! Eh?... For this while, too, I believe I am safe. If this place becomes too risky, why, the world is still large I think. Ah, I have a keen scheme or so, to work out!... You'll see, Olly."

Oliver appeared more preoccupied away from these confidences than a little earlier. He looked down at the floor, up at the pictures; at Arthur less than at other objects of sight. Arthur noticed how shockingly Oliver's hand had begun to tremble.

"I say, you're awfully knocked out, Olly," said Sandroy in his honeyed accent. "Straight through from Chicago, you say? Suppose we don't talk any more business to-night. And—see here—if you've not gone to any hotel, better get along here with me, till to-morrow, at least. I can put you up, after a fashion. You can tell me all about your doings, off in the East. No more business till morning, old man, eh?"

But instead of other reply, Oliver, looking Arthur full in the eyes, said: "One thing first, please. One! When you asked Joan to marry you—when you married her—after you were married—did you love her?"

The question, or triple question, certainly lacked nothing of the unexpected! Completely taken aback by its abruptness, Arthur hesitated, opened his lips to reply—again hesitated—then said angrily:

"Upon my word, Olly! I'm damned if I see any possible right whatsoever you've got, to put

such a question to me! You, or anybody else! What do you just mean by it?"

"I mean exactly—what I say," slowly returned Oliver. "I'll say it again. When you asked Joan to marry you—married her—and after you married her—did you love her. Really love her?"

"You are simply idiotically impertinent, Olly," replied Arthur, with a forced but significant laugh. "Still, I'll answer any question from you, of course—always. So I say, 'yes,' to the three questions, all at once."

"Then another question. Do you think you loved her as much as I did? As I could?"

"I don't know how much you 'loved' Joan, my dear Olly. It wasn't my business—it isn't—to know. Any more than for you to know anything further about what you've taken the pains to ask me? Now see here—please let us leave my wife out of all conversations between us, now and forever. The subject is the worst of superfluities, I think. Quite in the worst of taste between us. You know that; so please omit it henceforth. Besides, you're evidently in bad nervous order to-night, and I'm not brilliant myself—those infernal noises all around have got on my nerves. The squibs will be going on for hours yet. Let's have a b. and s. now, and get to sleep early. To-morrow we'll devote to your money-matters. I think you will be saved some thousands in the end—I hope so. Certainly, so long as I've a breath of life, you may be sure you've a chance of getting back what Sandroy & Co. have sunk for you. What Sandroy & Co. owe you, I owe you."

Oliver had grown suddenly quite white, while

Sandroy had uttered the last sentences. "Thanks—many thanks," he said, nodding his head up and down. Then raising it, and looking with that same peculiar expression in his eyes which had been puzzling Sandroy, he asked, "Arthur, do you know why I have come here to-night? Can you guess for what I have been crossing all the country, this week? I have come here to kill you!"

Sandroy stared, amused at first. Then in utter perplexity:

"You've—come here to—kill me?" ironically he repeated.

"Yes. Just that," replied Oliver. "To kill you!" And Oliver looked at Arthur fixedly.

"Ollie is out of himself, I'm afraid!" exclaimed Sandroy inwardly. "Keep cool, Ollie!" he said amiably. "If you've ever thought a thing like that, you'd better not say it to—anybody. Are you crazy? I know, I know how you feel! I wish to heaven I could have done better by you, in this damnable smash! It's an awful wreck of money! Still, a good part of it will come back—if slowly. I never suspected, till toward the last, how deep you would be let in. What could I do? Your funds, in part—"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed Anisdell, "The man is talking of my money, the infernal money! Who cares about my money?" he asked fiercely, turning upon Sandroy, who kept his chair, like a seated statue. "Do I care to-night—even if I am beggared? Not I!" He laughed bitterly. "Did you never think of something much more, so much more to me? Oh, God! Did you never, never think of it?" he continued in an outburst of passion, that made

Sandroy mute. "What, what have you done, all your life, but take from me, rob me, prey on me, dwarf me, set me at naught, week by week, year by year, till it has seemed to every man and woman who knew us, it has seemed to me myself, that I was made on purpose for you to thrive by me? Look back, and say that it is so! You were a far stronger, far handsomer boy. My father—liked you, contrasted me with you, took you into his house, just that we might always be contrasted. You stole from me whatever pride, whatever liking, my father might have taken in his son, his only son! You, a beggar, from the gutter! You grew up handsomer, cleverer, cunninger than I. The world has always passed me over, to look at you. My father made you—not me—his heir; and again men laughed at me, as a fellow that once more you had outwitted! Oh, these years!—when I have had to grit my teeth and smile at you, and speak civilly, when I hated the ground that bore your feet! But—oh, all the while, I swore that my turn should come, some day, to strike my account with you! No—you never expected it! You thought me a weak cur—as did others. You must have laughed in your sleeve, many a day, that I stood aside for you so promptly, over and over again!—that I seemed to shut my ears to the sneers behind my back. "That poor-spirited Olly Anisdell, who wouldn't dare to say his soul was his own, if Arthur Sandroy wanted to take it from him!" I wonder you did not! What a riddle to the world I have been? Your link-boy, your stool-pigeon, that always seemed to glory in such humiliation! You taught me patience, you

did, long ago, when my father snatched you out of the dust!—partly to give me lessons, partly because he liked you—just as I did. For I have liked you—well you know it—in spite of all, in spite of myself, in spite of everything that's rankled in me by your work! In spite of my hate—my hate growing and growing! Queer liking, to think of! But true!... And for such a lot of us it's been that same way. You could twist me about your finger, when I was with you. I could—damned idiot that I was—forget to hate you! But at last that one stupidity in me—at least *that* one—was over! Over forever! And I have studied cunning, endurance, patience from that hour to this!"

Oliver paused. After a few seconds, Arthur said quite tranquilly, "Go on, please. I wish to hear you out, Olly. For the first time, I see. In the way of a last item—last stroke—for instance?"

"Out? Very good. The last stroke? Why, for the last stroke, except my beggary to-night, you did what? You came between me and Joan Heriot! You did not love her. You know you didn't; though I dare say you could make her believe it..."

"Allow me to ask if you are under the impression that *you* loved—my wife? For—I have my doubts," said Arthur mockingly.

"I loved her! I loved her! She taught me what love can be! You know—as well as I—how such teaching can come to us! At least once in our lives. Yes, and I would have made her happy! She would have married me, yes, if you hadn't come on the scene. Oh, didn't I know how the world gossipped and sneered and smiled, to watch you just stretch out your hand, to draw from me the woman

for *me*, the only woman that I ever could love—I prayed God not to let you steal her from me! But for you, yes, but for you—Joan told me so—all could have been well with me!... See, what is the story of my life, my love, my fortune, but that of your convenience, your advantage over me, day in and day out? I have had a great patience, oh, a great patience! But it has ended! I promised myself some sort of reckoning, some day. Not for men to know of, to credit me with it! No! Only that I myself might know of it as at last paid, a debt lifted for time and eternity!”

It would not have been easy to set down the thoughts that surged through the brain of the fugitive during this revelation of a revolution. Sandroy had suspected nothing. Every man, however keen, can be blind to dramas even daily before his perceptions... Strange hour, in which two men recognized acquaintance, the familiarity of long years, as a delusion and a mockery. There were face to face, in this room, two strangers—two enemies.

Was Oliver mad? Or particularly clear-minded? Or in an intermediate limbo? And since when?

Arthur saw that he had not time to decide that. He must act on things just as they were acting on him—against him. But how? By trying to soothe down Oliver's excitement, to soften animosity that perhaps was homicidal?—whether such in sane or insane vengefulness? By denials of the premises, by reasonings, excuses, promises, entreaties? By all arts, more or less available?

No—Sandroy felt that those evasions of the underlying situation would not serve. Possibly

another instant would show a crisis in Oliver's mind, of an acute, tangible peril. Arthur had not so much as a pistol by him, though one was in a box—not far away. Besides, scandal in the house, intervention of outsiders, questions, an arrest for "Mr. Paulet"—discovery? Plainly a struggle would not pass quietly... At last, he was ready to reply.

"It is a pity we did not take each other into confidence before, Olly! It might have saved surprises—trouble. On thinking it over, I admit some aspects of your position. Yes, and I do not know why I never considered them before." He paused. In Arthur's curious head conflicting emotions were mingling... "But let us come to the point! To *your* point. You say I have done you injury—infinite injury. As compensation, what do you think I had better offer you now?" Sandroy was smiling a little disdainfully, putting the question as if it were of some commonplace. "By your account, I owe you any satisfaction that my human existence, the whole rest of it for me, could devise! My life has been your annihilation! I have gained only by your loss. My present worldly ruin—even that doesn't satisfy your enmity? Pays no part of my long debt, eh? You hinted at death as more capable, Olly? At my—assassination? What good would that do you, in the end? Really, Olly, why be so uselessly sanguinary, so Drury Lane-ish? You don't want to kill me, or anybody, Olly. No, no!"

"Don't!!" exclaimed Oliver.

Before the phrase was finished, Arthur saw a revolver in Oliver's hand. The revolver was full at Sandroy's face, not six feet away.

Sandroy retained his control, though he realized now the stress of the situation—the last one he would ever have considered possible between Oliver Anisdell and—anybody. Yes, Oliver was mad!

"Ah, you really have in mind to shoot me down, in cold blood. A sort of expiatory immolation? Very unnecessary, Olly. Besides, you can't do it here with safety to yourself. Better think it over more carefully."

"Either I kill you, or I tell the nearest policeman, out in the street, who you are, why you are here!... *That* isn't enough, I didn't come for that! What will you do? Have you any better "expiation" as you call it, to propose—than either such a death, or a felon's cell. What?"

"Yes," answered Sandroy gravely. "In fact, I will propose to you, Olly, to give me a chance, so to say. To be quite fair to me and to my fate—my star—in this quixotic fury of yours. Oh, you'll not repent of being less a monopolist in the matter, some day. Listen—and put down that stupid pistol."

"Oh, I'll wait till I hear what you propose," said Anisdell. The weapon was lowered; though as if only semi-consciously.

"It's plain that this is, so to say the turning in a long lane. You seem to think only life and death measures apply. You may have them, Olly. We will consider ourselves as merely a couple of insulted acquaintances—strangers. We have a quarrel, and you demand of me the satisfaction due to a gentleman, as the old phrase goes. That means the chance of your putting me out of existence, or of my doing that—service—displeasure—to you. We will treat the affair absolutely on that basis, no matter if you

decide afterwards that I have not appreciably satisfied your moral claims. Or your hate. You will, at any rate be excused from the charge of crazily shooting me down, like a dog, under my own roof—or under Monsieur Dauzat's respectable roof."

"Well—well I—" interpolated Oliver, with set teeth and a vague gesture, the pistol not laid down. What?

"We will go from here together, in half an hour—or less. You will give me that much time, strictly for—contingencies? It is a night of fire-arms and their noises, all over this region; though pistol-shots in this quiet house would not pass for just patriotic fury, I expect. Otherwise I'd say, "Here." I will take you, by the "Elevated," very far up-town, off, to a suburb of the city; a part that is practically the country. There's an old cemetery there; a vast neglected place. Nobody ever goes there now-a-days, alive or dead. It's off a sort of high-road. We can be there in an hour; for it's quite easy to get to. Nobody will pay any attention to us going; and to-night, with these popping noises all around the city and outskirts, we will not attract any notice by our target-practice. It is only about half-past nine, too. When we get to the spot we will place ourselves, exactly as might any challenger and challenged. Either of us can give the signal. It will not be at all a duel in the dark. There will be plenty of light. You'll see. And—so I forgot to tell you, but I have a revolver too, locked up in that closet there. It isn't loaded, but it's all right. Now, what do you say to this? Doesn't it sound more decent than leaving me here on the carpet, in my gore? Or than your communicating my biography to the station-house, down

the next street? Why it'll be quite a comedy, truly *bon ton*. Besides, you know I'm a pretty bad shot with a pistol. It seems to me a very elegant, gentlemanly, romantic chance, Olly, for your becoming a homicide, at my expense. And, after all, death will pay a lot of scores!—if I die. What do you say?"

A few instants. Then came Oliver's voice, thickly, doggedly, "I agree. Yes. But no shirking, no trying to--to—"

"To continue your debtor? As a sort of Artful Dodger? Oh, no, Olly. I accept the situation. My star has brought it; my star will carry it out, as is written for me. Will you be good enough to wait for me here? I will leave the door open into the next room. I must destroy some papers, put things together? A few moments."

"Yes—go on," said Anisdell. Oliver sat down on a chair by the open door. He rested his hot head on his hands. From time to time, he looked through the door. Arthur moved rapidly about, locking up matters generally, and burning papers in the grate. He had few memoranda; for in that matter, he had been radical, on leaving England. Not a hint of Sandroy & Company was extant with him here. He made changes in his dress, to one of a non-ecclesiastic kind, a dark, shabby suit. He loaded his pistol, took his cash and silver watch. He reflected—put in his pocket a note, written much before to-night. The note had not his real signature nor his pseudonymous one. It was signed "John Robinson." He left another note, for Madame Dauzat. This second billet, signed by the Reverend Mr. Paulet, mentioned that, unexpectedly, he might be called to

Boston that night; he 'was not sure, but it was quite probable; ' therefore 'if not back in his rooms next day, he would remain absent during at least a week longer.' ...He attended to these details with what else uppermost in mind? Yes, with just what? Hard to decide. He had no clear apprehension of the result of this fantastic, vaguely portentous expedition. It seemed to him like a sudden tragic-comic dream. It was to be got through with—dismissed. He had small fear of Oliver Anisdell's practicalities in it. Oliver was the worst marksman in either hemisphere. For his part, Sandroy, had not any intent to try to injure Oliver; far less to bring Oliver to a shocking and bloody end. That idea was preposterously horrible! On the way, or at the place—before the final farce-melodrama—one could temporize surely, and far more effectively than now. Oliver would calm down—yielding to influences still trustworthy. And after that—would be security.

So a mock duel, *au fond*, not more! Still, best to prepare for unforeseen conditions, especially for the affair as leading to a disclosure of identity. That Arthur dreaded—that only. Perhaps then he might find impossible any return to Ashland Place!

"I am ready," he presently informed Anisdell. He handed to Olly his hat and stick, mechanically; turned out the lights, and followed Oliver from the trim room. In silence, the two men descended the stairway together; and, unnoticed, left the house.

It was a fine, clear night. Much of the city was yet crackling, sputtering and banging. The two men did not exchange a word, as they walked briskly to the Elevated Railway station. They sat in silence

while they were sped smoothly up, past the quick-succeeding decades of streets, around the long and airy curves, to Harlem and its twinkling populousness. One Hundred-and-something Street! Arthur again was pilot. He took a road that would carry them farther still from the teeming centres of life and observation, stretching upward from the Battery and the City Hall. At last they got out into something very like country, but hardly solitude. Ramblers, noisy ones, often with squibs, met them in the road; laughing, calling, playing explosive jokes. The night of the Fourth was everywhere!... They mounted briskly a steep little hill. They were indeed fairly in the country now. The trees in the old cemetery stood up darkly against the sky. Fireworks were rising into the air, on all sides; from nearer or farther points. Every now and then, a brilliant, meteoric-like galaxy, falling stars of chemical radiance, made the road flash white, as if by full moonlight. The illuminated city, the great river below them, shimmered and were lucent, like the atmosphere, far and wide.

They leaped a fence, and made their way within the enclosure. Neglected tombs, half-vanished graves, shrubbery, sombre trees, silent old avenues were all about. A short alley stretched before them, deep within the circuit; one not dark—quite the contrary, in fact.

"Here?" asked Sandroy. "If you insist, Olly?"

"Here," responded Anisdell. "Insist? By G—d, yes!"

"Light enough?"

"More than enough. The fireworks will be useful, too."

Arthur had not undertaken even trivial talking with Oliver, during their transit, any more than while preparing for it. Besides, came now the notion—what use? His ideas were confused, his senses equivocated. Logic of the situation escaped him somehow, as did its full life-risk.

He was more preoccupied with thinking of what he would have to say to Oliver, to do with Oliver, as soon as this theatrical demonstration should be over. After it, their present and future relations would have to be discussed and really arranged. At least, as a *modus vivendi*. ... No human eye could behold them now; there was hardly the chance of a near passer, not to be startled by the sound of a weapon. That night of all others—the air echoing with explosives.

"Will nothing serve you except this business? I ask in curiosity," said Sandroy, when each man waited, well-defined for the other's aim, in the alley. "Come now. Better be a bit more prudent and—more affectionate, Olly. This is utterly silly."

"Nothing else!" retorted Anisdell—in an accent of dull enmity. "You may not find it so silly."

Really, Oliver was alarmingly firm of idea, however incapable a marksman. And therewith a strange reaction of intellect, nerves, convictions, as to what this situation *might* mean, came in a flash upon Sandroy! After all, was he trifling with a very serious aspect of fate? Perhaps he would not find it at all inconsequent. Perhaps there, in the bright evening, facing the notoriously tremulous hand and dubious eyesight of Oliver, almost careless of Oliver, he, Arthur Sandroy, nevertheless stood on the Great Verge! Was he, perhaps to go over?

Had he in this instant, some new, unimaginably new career about to open before him? Was he, perhaps, by this episode to know more of what were Existence and Fate than all those thousands of thousands of living men, in the many miles of crowded highways, long boulevards and avenues, whose lights cast a glow into the sky yonder?—more than the profoundest intellects in the world, have known, since men began breathing-in life and knowledge? Wonderful possibility!—if now really near, or not.

Oh, why, why should these thoughts come?... They passed. Oliver was speaking:

"Be quite ready, please," said Anisdell, "I shall count—count to five—maybe to more—before I say 'fire.' You understand?"

"Yes," replied Sandroy, calmly. "At the word 'fire.'"

Anisdell counted—"One—two—three—four—" Just then came, all about them, a great burst of light from a volley of descending rockets, across the river. It made the little avenue, where the two men had been waiting motionless, vividly bright for an instant.

"Five—fire!" said Anisdell.

The two reports were absolutely simultaneous. Sandroy's shot? Well—did he really aim it? Or did Arthur, on the contrary, just fire straight up into the air? He certainly did not even graze Oliver.


Anyhow, Sandroy fell. Anisdell flung down his pistol. He ran to Arthur with an exclamation which had in its tone a certain disconcertment, if also exultation. Arthur tried to say something. It sounded like—"Payment—in full—maybe—rather—more..." His head sank. In a few moments, he was lying dead.

alone there, under the stars, amid recurring flashes of the distant fire-works.

The papers, a few days later, reported the discovery, by some children, of the body of an unknown man, well-dressed in black—but not at all distinctively as a clergyman; lying in a thicket; in a remote corner, desolately solitary and unvisited, of the old Hudson Rest Cemetery, in that upper suburb of New York. A letter, incorrectly spelled, informed whomsoever it might come to, that one John Robinson, of Boston, incurably ill and despondent of recovery, had decided to put himself out of the way. Also that he had neither relatives nor friends who would take the slightest interest in his demise. He had considerable money on his person—notes and gold. The body was buried by the city, as that of an unclaimed suicide. No identity of it was ever effected—either as Sandroy or as Paulet.

The Dauzats were not a little concerned, first, by the prolonged absence, then by the complete disappearance of their lodger, the Reverend Mason Paulet. But his effects gave no clue to the mystery enveloping his sudden departure. The Dauzats were slow in communicating their solicitude—disliking a fuss. The police did not unravel the tardy affair. Mr. Paulet's clothing, books, and other personal property (a good deal of it nearly new, as was observed) the two Dauzats carefully packed for keeping safely, in the hope of hearing something from their owner, or from his unknown kin. They never had any such news. After a year or two, both the Dauzat's passed away, and a niece disposed of the Paulet belongings as she thought best.

Oliver Anisdell was not soon heard of, either as being or as having been in New York, or anywhere else ; at least, not during a year and more. He had apparently vanished entirely, after the Sandroy failure. London acquaintances could not trace him. There was, in time, a statement that Anisdell had been, for awhile, in some kind of a sanitarium in the State of New Jersey ; sheltered as a patient, arriving there voluntarily one morning, and making the arrangements summarily for himself—being ill nervously and needing immediate care, which he received. How this story reached London would be hard to say ; but it did so. Oliver never followed it. After awhile, affairs of the wrecked Sandroy & Company developed some tolerably favourable aspects for Oliver's income. Communication with him was opened, by advertisement. He answered letters from Arizona, where he was employed on a ranch, in some modest capacity ; quite in his right mind, apparently. Said one or another—"He went out there soon after that Sandroy fellow lost him his money, you know... He was on his way back from the East... He stayed off in the States, poor devil ! Only thing he could do for a living, no doubt !"



(TO MRS. GEORGE W. SIMMONS.)

WEED AND FLOWER: AN ART-THEORY.

"WHAT did you say?" asked Stephen sharply, suddenly recalling his vagrant attention.

"My dear friend, I said that the Primitive Church was perfectly right in its condemnation of all the fine arts—wholly right. You know, as well as I do, what an attitude the early Christians took; how the Church discovered, almost from the first, a sad truth—that from the very primal instant of the human soul's sensibility toward art—I mean art in its really finest aesthetic impulses—music, painting and sculpture—art constituted itself, as forever it will keep on demonstrating itself, a factor for man's spiritual evil. An irresistible charmer of humanity, it was and is immutably bound to be the world's most insidious spiritual curse. Subtle and specious beyond defeat, its potency is protean. The Church, in the light of divine perspectives of our human psychology, and of the solemn duty of the New Creed as a rescue of the world from the errors of pagan emotionalities—the Church felt keenly, intuitively that there must be no compromise with one of paganism's most brilliant allies. In smashing priceless sculptures, in demolishing fair details of the perfect monuments of heathen

architecture, in silencing lute and harp as voices of sirens luring the soul to Hell, in but grudgingly admitting to altar and choir only tuneless plain song, in whitewashing masterpieces of painting—in all this, or at least in heartily wishing to do as much—officially turning its back on whatsoever it could not annihilate—ah, the Primitive Church was magnificently intelligent! I laud it, I praise it!—I, who have passed my whole life in the business, so to say, of aesthetic production and in aesthetic considerations of art's universal messages! I am taking the matter impersonally, so to speak—aloof from many practical standpoints... Yes, I, an artist myself, have long been convinced that if the fine arts were nowadays under just such an hostile suspicion, disgraced and even banned, as was their case by the fierce intolerance of the Primitive Fathers, during the contemptuous aversion of early cloisters, through the horror of the hermits of the Thebaid, oh, this world would be vastly better morally!—the soul of sinful man farther on its way to Heaven! ... I do not believe that what we now understand as artistic beauty—take any form of it you prefer—exists at all, in the higher and holier state. Those expressions of the Beautiful that touch deeply our natures—they can have nothing to do whatever—or too infinitesimally and grotesquely little!—with really supreme embodiments of the Beautiful, to a finer eye or ear or soul. We don't yet begin to realize nearly such Beauty; what efforts the world has been allowed to make, as civilizations have advanced, have been poor and poisonous shams. As painters, sculptors, musicians,

"we have never followed once any helpful, ethically useful road, in our works. For some mysterious reason, man has never been allowed to take such a road—alas!"

Stephen had waited, mute, till his friend's tirade was over. There was an interesting contrast between the two men. Eldred was dark, spare, with a sharp-cut profile; his eyes luminous with fancy rather than with logic. His mien was usually aggressively positive. He was ever likely to vent some theory, now whimsical or sober, in a fine outburst, now ironical, now in fluent earnestness. Stephen's type was quite the Saxon, the enthusiast in him less often coming to vivid expression than the fairly reflective idealist—even to a little hesitation of speech. Yet the pair were intimates from boyhood; and if constantly disagreeing intellectually, they never quarrelled otherwise. Their temperaments and ideas and hobbies were much unlike; but that fact raised no psychic discords. Eldred had been busy in æsthetic criticism, during many years, as well as in practical painting; with success in each interest. Stephen's small fortune, his uncertain health, and his dislike of publicity, kept him a composer and musician of only semi-recognition, despite fine gifts. In much, Stephen was a typical dilettante; merely a dreamer, some said—perhaps with truth.

"Now, now—wait a bit just there!" Stephen expostulated calmly. "You know well enough that you can't expect me to countenance such barbaric extravagances, my dear Eldred! Our human hearts, regenerate or unregenerate, surely have ever the warrant, to seek what is beautiful; the right

to create to enjoy what seems beauty in this life, whatever we may find worth while or not, in another life. Human idealism has a charge to express the aesthetic ; to live with Beauty and in Beauty, as far as individual existence shall allow. As for art's influence on men and on women, why, Eldred, what has art—true art I mean—the best music, best painting, best sculpture, best architecture—what have they done but refine, uplift, purify—as well as develop themselves—by adorning and delighting us ? Poor innocent, mysterious Art ! So often, I admit, betrayed and degraded, but with its high spiritual relationships never dissolved ! Whenever we create or see or feel what is of high, noble beauty—throughout—we are in touch with the spiritual ; with the divine, future life — “ the life of the world to come.” I am sure of it ! Our highest developments of art, albeit through mere men and women, to mere men and women, are of God !—His moral message to humanity, His voice from Heaven. God is surely in our art ! Why, God was the first artist—the first maker and teacher of beauty to His world here ! Ah !—He knows well how much or little of Heaven is made eloquent by us to the average careless soul, to the average dull and unimaginative human existence ! But thank God ! at least some part is made so, in an invaluable mission, for man's high moral and intellectual elevation ! ”

“ ‘ Much or little of Heaven made eloquent ’ by art's activity ? Note just one aspect, Stephen. Remember what I've pointed out to you before now. No matter how we sentimentalize on art's celestial mission, what grim, unpleasant facts face us when we look their way ! The artistic temperament ? What

is it? As a rule, the most unethical, ill-regulated, unwholesome, unsatisfactory temperament, often the most crudely vitiated psychology, that we can analyze, outside of the distinctively criminal planes. Its power to produce great music, great sculpture, great graphic performances is extraordinarily compatible with a soul that is rancid, with a nature that is vile! The artistic temperament is a sort of psychic joke—often a bad one. The artist is almost always cursed somewhere by moral weakness that makes him, or rather, no personal good to society; even if he or she be not a declared personal pest. Intellect and art are often in vaguest equations. Men and women, who are extremely receptive of artistic beauty, why, sooner or later they have a way of exciting our moral censure or our moral pity. Grand painters personally are too often indeed "like children," as goes the phrase; over and over like *bad* children. Musicians? Mostly like untrusty deficient children—"

"Thank you, dear Eldred," interpolated Stephen, with quiet merriment.

"Oh, hang it, you're among the exceptions that prove my rule! Why man, look at the history of civilization! Don't we see, over and over again, that when a rugged, dominant, vigorous people develops on and on in artistic impressionabilities, it degenerates, debilitates, it loses its racial vitality, it disintegrates—perishing as a nation? Oriental peoples, the marvellous Greeks, the Etruscans, the Romans, the Italians, the Spanish—their increasing sensibility to art killed them all! Even we half-aesthetic British, we are at last in the way of proving the same decadence! Nations are like swans: they

'die in music ; ' they rot away when they have grown supremely, spontaneously glorious in lovely painting, in noble sculpture, precious architecture ! Aestheticized to vice, they cannot withstand enemies, within or without. The climax of creativeness in the individual, the highest refinement in popular appreciation of art, include moral and—often—physical degeneracy. So let us be frank and final ! Art is a curse ! We love it, we live in it. We even die in it and for it, day by day, generation by generation. But it is our malediction. It is civilization's upas-tree ; we are lured under its blossoming boughs, that we may inhale dulcet poison, to our destruction. History accepted, the aesthetic individual is doomed. The aesthetic State is doomed. The aesthetic Church is doomed."

" But Eldred, it seems to me that you do not estimate enough the exceptions, racially or individually selected, where art and high moral and spiritual and virile—or feminine—qualities are united,—poised, out of all discussion.

" I don't forget them ; but such are not more than in a proportion to prove my rule. Holding to a theory that what seems to us continually the Beautiful, is constantly not of the Good, and not from humanity really either beautiful or good, why, I believe that with true and real Beauty no mortal artist-mind yet has ever come into touch. Beauty is a bitterly painful mystery, so far as this world of ours is engrossed by it. Man accepts as beautiful—be it symphony or song, statue or picture, what is not really beautiful. If it were, it would be everywhere and always our evident good ; not so

largely our social psychological evil; and we would not be consumed, like moths fluttering around a candle, by trivial, gaudy, impure flame that we think is the sun." *

A third voice spoke, from a farther and darker corner. Father Davenant was sitting over there, placidly; the glimmer of his cigar alone indicating his silent and serene presence.

"Eldred! Stephen!" he exclaimed, in cheerful protest. He came forward, cautiously picking his path between chairs and tables, in the long, obscure library. The firelight brightened as he approached, revealing his tall, old form and statuesquely regular countenance, above which the hair was silvery white. "My dear boys! How you do go on!"

Father Davenant sat down beside Stephen, on the leather divan. "Of course you both know well that you have suddenly set yourselves to talking about a problem on which the world has meditated uncomfortably—that is to say, in proportion to conscience and intelligence—has worried over, argued about, and finally (as one may believe) has agreed to disagree—during centuries. I fear you two young men cannot settle the matter here, tonight, in Stephen's library. Ah, ah!—the question of the value of art to the soul—the ethical work, the spiritual influence of fine arts—it is indeed a business much farther from clarity than may think many millions of enthusiasts and sentimentalists! So much *pro*, so much *contra*! And the other question, for fantasy, that is involved, one which has just been

* The author's novel "A Matter of Temperament" deals with the topic of interrelations of aesthetics and morals.

included by something that Eldred said, a moment ago—what relation our conceptions of the Beautiful sustain to highest and quite supernatural principles and embodiments of the Beautiful—ah, who shall be able to decide that equation for us, in this mortal life? It must be theory here! Along with much of the great Beyond, we are wisest to consider it out of man's knowledge. Our creeds do not formulate definitively what should be our aesthetics, tested by—even—faith."

Father Davenant was silent again. Then he said, hesitatingly, "Yes—a mystery! But instead of discussing it with you, dear friends, would you perhaps care to hear an experience of mine that has some bearings, vaguely at least, on both halves of the problem? Indeed the incident in question has long summarized, more or less, my personal ideas in the matter of man as artist; my hopes of our warrantable predispositions to make this world full of what we think so fair to eye or to ear. Shall I tell you the story to-night?"

"To our greatest pleasure, surely, Father!" answered Eldred quickly. The restless man of letters and of canvases loved dearly the old priest, Stephen's nearest relative, though not of close kin. Father Davenant had been a friend and guide to both from boyhood, though neither Stephen nor Eldred were avowed Catholics.

The priest drew back more comfortably against the divan. The fire flickered gently, the room grew quite still.

"To begin," resumed Father Davenant, "I have always put faith in the notion that Eldred

It has touched on—that our phases of the fine arts here deflect from expressions on like lines, but far lovelier, of the Life and Mind above us. In the world to come—it is a world almost come to many!—in the world to come, the original thought will be met in perfection! We will realize *then* how far we have been inferior workmen. To be precise, I assume that every picture, every piece of sculpture, every melody and harmony in music, each arrangement of colours, lines, forms, tones, has a relationship, near or far away (according to intent and talent exercised) with some arrangement of colours, lines, forms, tones, evolved and arranged similarly, but vastly more beautifully—Elsewhere. A celestial and divine genius, in his own higher sphere, by his surer sensibilities, has anticipated man's idea of such a creation. It is indeed not 'creation,' down here, with us. We make a sort of unconscious borrowing from Up-there. Our human conceptions and faculty have been allowed to go merely as far as they can reach by a sort of duplicate; one unluckily not fair enough, though as good as we deserve, or can appreciate in this existence. Now, just because the art we evolve is not finer, why, so its moral mission to the world is not of full effect—completer. If we were better men than we are, our art would be diviner; and such art's influences on men's and women's souls, characters, lives, would be incontestably, invariably uplifting. I like to think of everything that Raphael or Andrea Correggio painted, of every touch in the Hermes of Praxiteles, of every measure of Palestrina or Mozart or Beethoven—that they are none of

them *new*, save to human perception; each and all such beauty being, after all, just our imperfect repetitions of divine prototypes Beyond! You may call me a fanciful, sentimental old man, my dear boys; but I love to credit concrete embodiments of art in Heaven! Whatsoever and wheresoever is to be 'Heaven' for us, individually or all together, let us look toward it, as a state of unlimited beauty, for which we must try to prepare ourselves by what here is our best beauty and good."

"Ah," continued the priest, "for human artists—mere commissioners, if workers or connoisseurs—no perfect art! Our humanity's planes, intellectually, aesthetically and psychically, are too low. Art stoops to us as far as it can do so. Art would draw us upward. We are too gross; we combat art's fine, tender condescensions. Eldred—Stephen—the so-called ethical fault, or problem, in art is the fault in us, *our* best is not good enough to lift us! We are journeymen, not masters; unable to conceive, or to execute as we should yearn to do. Our fine arts are divine hints, disconcertingly—but let us believe, wisely—limited; the wraiths of expressions of loveliness not allowed to invade our earth. They must not be blamed for what is amiss in human temperaments, full of weaknesses, errors, sins; often while so influenced by the aesthetically beautiful. We are assured that God has made men "after" a divine model—made Man in His own "image." Is it not then logic to believe that often man's works towards beauty are similarly fashioned? Formed by us with some approach to a supernatural model, each time? I think so. We know at best

only the weed; the flower, its high relative, is over yonder. When God will at last allow us to behold the flower blooming, we will find no aesthetic paradoxes to confuse us; any more than will we find many other things inseparable from our human sojourn, till we come nearer to God."

"It strikes me, Father, that in such a view of art's earthly imperfection, ethical limits, God treats us rather cruelly," demurred Eldred respectfully.

"Ah, Eldred, we are none of us treated by God as ill as we deserve! Never less kindly than His wisdom shall justify in eternity."

Father Davenant paused a little. Then he resumed:

"But there!—I am rambling too far into my metaphysics, or metaesthetics! You will perhaps find them more concrete, when I tell you that my conviction of mortal art's imperfect types, my idea of its celestial, perfect models, came to me through—a dream. Yes—a dream." He lowered his voice again.

"Pray tell us the dream, Father Davenant," said Eldred gently.

"I was a young man, busy at my studies in the university—drawing on to the close of one of my last semesters. I was also occupied as a private tutor in the town, where I had a handful of pupils. So came another winter, with holidays and a visit home, and a night that was the last of the old year. I had promised to spend that evening very quietly, with a friend, at his house. The friend, though older than I by several years, was still relatively young artist; one of talent, of success, of wealth; and, even more acceptably, of growing

promise. His days and nights were busy, and my absence had been long. It was a privilege to us both to find ourselves once more quite by ourselves. Besides, we purposed to talk over a special project, in which we felt critical interest; as to which we had exchanged only hasty letters."

"I remember clearly the odd, almost romantic, circumstances, in which we sat in R—'s still library-studio that night—much as we three, my dear boys, sit here this evening. Business dismissed, we talked on and on; sometimes amused at our airy inconsecutiveness, laughing at being obliged to come back again to some particular issue on which we had begun a paragraph. As I talk with you now, I seem to return to that far-away dim room; lights low, the soft fire-shine like that one yonder. Once more I see the grave figures in old paintings on the walls, many of the canvases being portraits brought from abroad by R—; here and there a face white and spectral in a frame, shining vaguely out into the darkness. They inclosed us, as if a ghostly, jealous audience from the past; collected in judgment upon the convictions, enthusiasms and queries of two young men, who repeated what seemed to them reasonably novel and original, being nevertheless so old and trite!"

"The embers in the grate glimmered. The curtains hung like breadths of shadow. Faint odours of the roses on the table pervaded the air. The fire presently sank lower—became dull. If we looked around us casually, there was only a flicker from the gold on some heavy frame, the pallid shimmer of a statuette from a corner, the half-suggested mass

of colour of a rug, the vague volume of a piece of furniture—as obtrusive suggestions of a material world.

“ We had sat talking thus, until towards the middle of the evening. The house now was wholly still, save for the subdued murmur of our voices. The street was almost soundless. A few passers-by, a few carriages, rarely a call or a whistle, made the quiet only more sharp.

“ The clock struck eleven. As it did so my friend chanced to be saying, ‘ But à propos—what then do you, on the whole, feel to be—for *you* the most beautiful expressions of art yet obtained in painting and music? Your own personal sense of a successful appeal of Beauty supreme—the eloquence to you of the Beautiful? ’ ”

“ ‘ In a painting? ’ ”

“ ‘ In a painting. One of more or less classic recognition, I mean. ’ ”

“ ‘ In the way of a picture, I—but you will not agree at all with me, I warn you! ’ ”

“ ‘ Never mind. Go on—do not fear! ’ ”

“ ‘ Well then—the Madonna of the Saint Sebastian, of Allegri, in the Dresden gallery. Neither more nor less. ’ ”

“ ‘ Really? H-m-m-m! I must admit, that—
—I—cannot—I could not hardly— ’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, I know perfectly well what you ‘ cannot and could not hardly,’ say about it! Not say enough depreciatively—as about plenty of other pictures by Correggio! I know well what critics, even if *correggisti*, have decided of him; of his rank in art, of his best works—those far better than the painting

I mention. The picture I like so well, oh, I know how during generations, it has been regarded as a 'very charming painting'—'very rich'—'very harmonious'—'very *Correggio*'—sundry other 'verys' among the *allegriissimi*—if you allow the pun? But—but also what a lively little collection of offsetting 'nots!' Not at all a 'deep picture,' not 'a mature picture,' not 'a sincere picture,' not a "supreme work." One with even some technical shortcomings! Above all—as so frequently is Correggio's case—not a picture of 'adequate religious sentiment.' Quite 'mundane, superficial in its types; of a drawing-room piety!'—even if a *capo lavoro*. Oh, I know! Now, just spare me all that, please; especially as I am among the most obstinate admirers of Correggio, whom I much prefer to Raphael. Yes, much! Maybe in theory I assent to almost all objections to just that Madonna. But practically, I send them each and all to—Gehenna! They are as the idle wind, which a lover regards not when it tosses a wisp of gauze across the forehead of his beloved! For, that painting, to my heart, is one of the loveliest things art knows. Correggio must have had a vision when painting it; perhaps too in working at the Madonna of the Saint George. Another painter could have made it more "spiritual," undoubtedly—especially that very young, saccharine, almost coquettish Madonna—a sort of *marquise* who is astonished and entertained by maternity. But Correggio didn't. Art could easily have given a more divine infancy to the Holy Child? Correggio didn't! He could—perhaps—have made that adorable young Saint Sebastian less an italian *efebò*, one for a girl to dream

about, longing to be loved by him, as can only a girl have the right to dream of him! Correggio didn't make him otherwise. Correggio, perhaps could—should—have made a less elegant Saint Geminianus, one more influenced spiritually by his situation. Correggio could, or should, have made Saint Rochus more devout of aspect, even in sleep, and of another posture and gracefuller gestures. In sum, Correggio perhaps could, should—have made the picture one more to pray before; a thing to lift one's thoughts higher away from earthly lovelinesses, to breathe devotion to the casual spectator. Correggio did not so make the work. And I do not wish it any different! I do not wish any other Madonna of the Saint Sebastian.' "

" Shaking off my hesitant mood, I went on in the same general development of an enthusiastic theory of the fine arts, as that which I have been sketching to you, Stephen and Eldred, a few moments ago: "

" ' My dear R—, I believe that somewhere in the other world is a diviner Original of, say, that very painting; one more uplifting and soul-inspiring; more 'religious,' if you like, but not merely *pietistic*. Such a concept measureably informed Correggio's mind and brush, as he painted his Madonna; though maybe by all sub-conscious influences. It is thus a derivative—a sort of earthly-heavenly canvas. In the supernatural picture, you would not find the detractives in Correggio's picture. No!—it would be perfect in sentiment as in workmanship, a thing divinely out of our criticism; a sublime thought of Beauty all realized. So there now! You see I don't care a penny for what you will say.' "

" ' My dear fellow, replied R—' I say only that you urge by advocacy of your senses rather than by your judgment the claims of a lovely but most unsatisfactory work. Think it over! Besides, remember other pictures that appeal to you; reflect a little on Botticelli—Raphael—Andrea—Bazzi—Mantegna—Titian—' "

" '—And a thousand others, ancient or modern? Not at all! You have asked me what picture I feel as the most beautiful expression of painting, such personally—to me. That is, after all, emotion of one's heart, rather than head. It's like love—a kind of passionai love.' "

" Please remember, Eldred—Stephen," interpolated Father Davenant, " that this conversation which I report to you took place some—let me see—well, forty years ago; when I was not a priest, my dear boys, which nevertheless I became awhile after. I did not then even think of becoming one. I was then just a busy, wordly, enthusiastic young man of letters; one with no more expectation of entering the religious life than has either of you at this minute. But—strange enough to think of it!—that very talk was but a few months before there came to me unexpectedly the grief that made me wish to forget all except God—God, who taketh away even as he giveth—blessed be His Name!... "

The priest made the sign of the cross; saying nothing for an instant. Then he resumed:

" ' Very well,' said my friend R—' of course to each his taste and emotions! You elect Allegri's Madonna of the Saint Sebastian—which I willingly concede to be a work of charm, by a great hand,

though not of that hand's maturity, nor art-work of a great art-mind. Now come to music! What do you 'feel' to be the most beautiful expression—for you—in musical art? The G Minor Symphony of Mozart? The Adagio of Beethoven's Symphony in A Major? The apotheosistic close of the "Eroica"? A page in the colossal Galitzin Quartets? Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony"? Bach's Mass in B minor? Or something more of our psychic modernity—say, Wagner—the fellow that lately, they begin to make such a fuss about, over there in Germany? "

" "No—no—no! Not even Mozart or Beethoven. To me nothing else in music attains to the beauty of almost all of the finest church-music of Palestrina. Any one of his supremely perfect masses and motets! Or those by some of his like, in Italian polyphonic church-music. Ah, there are so many to choose! It is hard to select, where all is often so almost supernaturally lovely to the ear. But, mind you—again and there I have the same conviction of music as due to informing, suggesting Originals, supernatural creations, concrete and extant Elsewhere—allowed to work subtly on the composer, as does a fellow-art on the painter. And I apply the same theory to sculpture, from Pheidias to Michelangelo." "

" "Enough, my dear friend!" exclaimed R—. He repeated, smiling and meditative, "A Madonna by Correggio? A score by Palestrina? Well, it seems that in each instance you unite the directly religious intention in art with higher forms of art for itself?" Then he added musingly, "The old scheme." "

" "Yes, the old scheme," I replied—"and a good scheme!" "

"For a moment there was deeper silence. Suddenly R—sprang up. 'Come with me,' he said, 'and be astonished at a charming coincidence, if considering your first answer! I have been amused at the chance, while you spoke of Correggio?'"

"He took my arm. Guiding me into the long drawing-room adjoining, he turned up the lights. The walls on three sides were lined with pictures. But nearly an entire side of the room was bare, save for a magnificent copy, in no important reduction, of Correggio's Madonna of the Saint Sebastian!"

"Its presence was wholly new and accidental, in my friend's house. He was no great admirer of Correggio, as indeed are not many modern critics of art. This copy had been executed in Dresden, by a confrère, on the order of a client whose mansion was closed for a time. Sent to the care of R—, he had given it hospitality, till the owner should send for it. It was really a superb transcription. The picture was fairly luminous of life, in the glory of forms and colours. The young Saint Sebastian was transportingly copied; he shone out in hellenic fairness of contours. The Virgin with the Child were not much less captivating than the original canvas in Dresden makes them to us. The two adult saints, those older and half-idealized boys, the really cherubic cherubs—all were admirably duplicated."

"I do not remember that we said anything immediately as we stood there; R—smiling with me at a sort of a successful *coup de théâtre* on his part.

" Presently R—observed gravely, as to himself, ' The Madonna of the Saint Sebastian—the Saint Sebastian of the Madonna?—Yes—maybe there is some truth in what you have said.' "

" We left the picture, and returned to our easy-chairs in the next room, for the hour that was to come before our friendly *séance* must end. In due time, it was over. The clock struck midnight. ' A Happy New Year ! ' we exclaimed, as I sprang up. ' A year of brightening intelligences, a year of wider spiritual horizons, as well as of wider artistic outlook ; a year of more unselfish living, as of higher thinking, for us both ! ' "

" I left R—, and came home under the starlight. I slept soundly, I think, all the first part of the night ; for I believe that it was not until towards morning that there came my dream, some preceding influences toward which I have thus sketched."

" The impression was gradually borne in upon me that I was awake, was on my feet, and was walking cautiously through a short, half-lighted passage. It was in the upper part of a building not wholly unknown to me ; yet I could not place it, nor recall clearly its interior. Walking on, I was still calling to mind the conversation with my friend R—recollecting, too, what he or I had not thought to say. But as I walked, I also was conscious that I was bound upon a brief, solemn, and particular errand ; and that before me, at the end of the little passage, would surely be the door of a chapel or oratory. I was going thither to pray. Seemingly the place, the hour, which was toward sunset of a clear winter-day, even the persons whom I should presently join,

were not strange matters to me, though they were vague in my mind. Softly I opened a low-browed, brown-painted door that suddenly faced me. A cross was painted on one of its panels. I stole into the room."

"Yes, it was an oratory, the one that I half-knew—and a Catholic one. It was situated in the topmost story of a tall house. An ordinarily large chamber in the dwelling, or perhaps two rooms, had been converted into a place of worship. I think that a male school, partly of a parochial sort, was held elsewhere in the building. There were a couple of dozen long oaken forms. On these already sat some young men, all with their backs to me, undisturbed by my careful entrance. A knot of others sat further forward and apart from the rest, to the right of a simple altar. Each pupil or assistant wore a black habit. The light that shone with a faint rosiness before the altar, denoting the presence of the Sacrament, some candles burning, were almost obliterated by the strong yellowish glow of the western sky. There the sun was declining, beneath a gray bank of low-lying bands of cloud. Unruffled gold stretched flat under almost unbroken gray. One looked out from the peaceful room by three large windows, with small bright panes; two of which windows were toward the sunset."

"A priest, in a plain black cassock, had just finished speaking when I came in. His kindly eye seemed to chide me a little for my delayed arrival, as he looked toward me for an instant. I recollect what I said to myself—'Late again! Shall I ever manage to reach here untardily?' But my passing

mortification gave place instantly to a new and very different series of emotions."

"Behind the priest, over the reredos of the altar, hung the most imposing copy—shall I so call it?—of Correggio's Madonna of the Saint Sebastian that I believe genius on earth, or genius out of it, could execute or conceive! Copy? It far, it unutterably far, surpassed our so-called original picture! Every shortcoming, detractive either of the ideal or of the technical, in Allegri's work, was corrected, seemed here never to have existed—was invisible, in the supernatural painting, gracing that humble oratory! I shall not touch on its technique. The whole picture was superhuman! Was not Correggio's well-known creation, in the Dresden Gallery, a copy? an unworthy representative? Beyond all other qualities, in the canvas so before me, was one that seems to you, I dare say, impossible; for, such a compelling picture in religious expressiveness I had never conceived! Perhaps—alas!—I am not to be transfixed again by its glorious and serene perfectness! How to describe the face, the expression, there so etherealized, so spiritualized!—of that young, serene Virgin Mother! How to convey the dignity of the Child—a type which seemed to comprehend everything in me and all the world! How to put into words the countenances, the expressions of those heavenly little lads, one of whom guides the eyes of Saint Sebastian upward, as if away from considering his own beauty; while the boy opposite looks downward, serenely! And the angelic *putti*; and back of all, that delicate glimpse of landscape!... It was not a matter merely of drawing, of colours,

of modeling, nor of just the technical art of an amazing brush. I cannot write what it was!—a thing out of my power. But—it was!"

"I know, too, that I realized all this in the brief time in which I stepped forward from the door. So doing, I bent my knee to the altar—but my eye still must have been fixed on the painting; and I knelt in the nearest vacant form, with only one other worshipper therein beside me. Whether, as I knelt there, I was conscious that I had before then seen that marvelous duplicate—so much more than that!—of the pencil or not, I am unable to decide. I think a dim sensation did cross me that before now I had met the picture; had approached it, even to kneeling often thus before its face. If I had been within that room before then, surely I had seen it! And had I not been there? Or else, did it then hang before my eyes as a veritably new vision."

"It did not occur to me to notice, nor to ask, whether the picture appealed similarly to any of the others. Extraordinary as was the emotional effect upon me, through my vague, sudden conviction that it was supernatural, why, even so, this impression of its significance, a new or a twice-told one, consumed but the twinkling of an eye. Another moment, and my face was between my palms. The solemn words of the priest, who had turned to the altar and had begun intoning a Latin collect, fell gently into my heart. The light of that yellowish sunset sank into paleness about us. Evidently this was a quite customary sort of vesper-service, or compline, in the house. It seemed familiar to me, as to one who had been a friend and frequenter of

it. And yet oh, when, *when* had I been present as it, before this mystic hour? "

" Four more collects were intoned. Then came a stillness. The priest remained before the altar. The little congregation, younger or older, were engaged in silent prayer. I, too, was praying with them. My heart was full, I know. As I speak now, there comes to me again that strange sense of Divine nearness, in that hour and place... No, Heaven was not far! To strive for it was no trouble. Everything else was a waste of life—a trifle—utter broken glass and tinsel! God was always near us—ever about us! Nothing else was good or natural or even easy, save serving Him! "

" I raised my head. The great picture was somewhat veiled by shadow. The sunset-light in the room was lessened. But the steadfastness of the of the supernatural in the picture was yet felt. And now the movement for some latter, if unusual, incident of this unique service—wherever it was held—had come. Eight sitters, to the right—in the upper part of the chamber—rose. I perceived that they constituted a little choir. There were four boys—two sopranos and two altos; and an equal adjustment of four adults—tenors and basses. There was no accompaniment. The priest still was kneeling. "

" They began to sing, *a capella*, and immediately, without the least hesitation or want of confidence. It was plainly a practiced, easy duty and delight to them. What they sang was a sort of *motet* or anthem. I was—through no fault of the beautiful clearness of each singer's utterance—a little slow in catching the syllables. For, just the sudden splendor of their harmony took away my breath! Such voices,

such singing bewildered me! They bereft me of inclination to determine the burden of articulate phrases. Soon, however, 'word took word, as takes hand.' They were sentences from the Psalter—words never to be worn out by mortal tongues:

' Confitemini Domino in cithara. . . .

*De coelo respexit Dominus: . . . de preparato
habitaculo suo respexit super omnes filios
hominum. . . .*

*Qui finxit sigillatim corda eorum: qui intelligit
omnia opera eorum.' . . .*

"Such singing! No Sistine choir of old, no mortal throats that ever existed, could approach the music of that oriel! It was uplifting, divine, inexpressibly beautiful. Each voice was of an unearthly fullness and sweetness. The accord was unmarred by one vibration of unsympathy. If one of those boys, or some of their ethereal companions, whom I saw painted in the picture before me that evening—if some one of the cherubs, scarcely visible now in the dome of the great church at Parma, where Correggio has left them—charming to-day despite defacements—could have uplifted his celestial treble, he could not easily have been substituted for any of those amazing boyish lyrists to whom I hearkened in that mysterious oratory. Was not the fair-limbed Sebastian listening to the music, rather than looking at the Blessed Mother and her baby Son? How could Saint Rochus sleep and dream?... The tones rose and fell, swelling and subsiding; interweaving their burden as the pure polyphony progressed. The words became infused with a new signifi-

cance. Each reiterated phrase was of melody and harmony which man could never have conceived—I felt that. And then it flashed upon me!—this was religion expressed in perfect and celestial music, just as the picture had impressed itself on me as religion expressed by something perfectly and celestially drawn and painted! But, alas!—it was art again in such perfection, because elevated beyond earthly possibilities, beyond mortal conditions; art made one with the heavenly and the beatific state!

“ But this was not all that such an hour was to bring to me—by God’s grace!—of the supernatural and immortal. For, as the singing progressed, it seemed to me that one of the two sopranos individualized itself on my attention. Somewhere else, long before this hour I had heard those skylark notes! Now, busy as had been my life, one much given over to other work, I had acted, during some years, as tutor to a young lad. When I met him he had not entered upon his teens. A great affection had grown up between us. Gradually he had become the center of my life, the light of my day-to-day existence, which already, while I was still a young man, had grown strangely aloof in innermost psychology, detached from even those friends most frequented. Mystically my heart had revolved more and more closely around the boy’s affection for me—so vivid, despite the difference in our ages. (What indeed are almanacs and arithmetic of years, to the currents of sympathy?) To that lad had been given not only a face and a soul of strange loveliness, but a voice that was like a star singing in its sphere! It had been my delight to be with him. Even after

his tuition with me had ended, the supremacy of such companionship remained my dearest memory. In times when I had tried to rest from work, from thought, to his presence had been added his wondrous singing. But years had gone by apace. Basil had left his early boyhood behind. The mannish crack had come to him—unwelcome usurper! He and I together had mourned that departed gift, possessed for so few years; together had we sighed—he with the half-sorrow of a school-boy's thoughtless spirit—over what was forever lost. But now as my hearing, little by little, concentrated on that utterance of celestial melody, there came to me, first, a thrill of recognition, then doubt, and last a joyful certitude! I exclaimed softly, in an intense surprise and happiness, 'O Basil, Basil! Yonder singer is not thy past nor present self, dear lad! But that is the voice which was thy voice! Some one hath it in his turn—a gracious loan—for his time. It was taken from thee, and lent to him! Or else it was something created to be shared by each in turn; though, to my ear and soul, a bestowal too much a part of thyself to be parted forever from thee. Heaven shall restore it to thee! Of earth I ever knew it was not—oh, boy of my heart!'

"Realizing my impulsiveness, I turned my head, to see if my passionate whisper had been marked. My eyes met Basil's! He had all this while been kneeling beside me, in that mysterious room! Yes, he was there, as so often he had knelt beside me in a certain dim old church. Basil, so suddenly an invalid, far-distant in his Californian halting-place, whither I had just written him!"

" ' Basil—do you hear it? Do you know it? ' I whispered to him. ' It is another one of the miracles of this hour and place! ' "

" In his murmured answer, there was no surprise, none, at our encounter thus: "

" ' Yes, I hear it—I know it,' he responded gravely. (Ah, even in the hushed tone, that cadence!) ' The voice was mine, and it is mine! It is lent to him. It could be lent to others, even while I live. But when I shall return to God—the return is near, He calls me—that voice is to be mine, once more, with the rest of the inheritance I am to possess through Him. Ah, have you not told me, over and over again, that ' my birth was but a sleep and a forgetting? '—that ' this soul that rose within me had its setting ' elsewhere; it might be, with God? ' His blue eyes were filled with a light of confidence that made them radiant."

" The lad's hand met my own. We spoke no more. Words seemed a waste—speech needless in that hour! "

" With our faces turned toward the altar and the dulled sunset, in silence, our palms still joined, we listened to the concluding measures of that amazing octet; to that harmony which I believed I never could forget. So harkening together, the singing diminished in volume. The last clause of the last verse of the anthem ceased. We bowed our heads. The benediction of the priest descended upon us. Presently, still hand in hand, Basil and I were moving with the others, by soundless footsteps, from that darkened upper-room, from the picture behind the altar, from a series of emotional

experiences that I dreaded to realize as a dream, yet already feared were only such stuff as dreams are made of."

.....
"When I awoke, it was bright starlight, but starlight preceding the dawn; indeed the dawn was whitening below the stars. The world was not yet astir. I sprang upward; then, realizing where I was, I fell back on my pillow. I lay still, asking myself where I had been—what had happened? Had I but dreamed? All *that* only a dream?... Or had I been caught up in spirit, as it were?—set down for a little while in a kind of Patmos? Was it absurd, profane, to dare to think as much?... The dawn grew rose and yellow, the sky became sapphire, the sun mounted. It was day—earth's day. The land and sea were already busy. But still my mind's eye could recall, if all too faintly, that indescribable picture; in my ear yet echoed that heavenly-voiced choir; above all other tones in it, that one crystalline, boyish soprano, to which Basil shall again bid me harken, as we sit beside the murmuring Waters of Peace. There, surely I *For*, the lad died that year; died before I could tell him how strangely I had, as it were, met him again; had heard his voice, in a meeting which I felt no letter could well describe. Ah, he died to teach me how frail are the ties of earthly happiness!—died, that in returning to God, as he had warned me he must soon do, I should know one of God's means to bring me more whole-heartedly to Himself, with Whom is Basil!... Once upon a time, I tried to trace on paper some of the cadences of that motet, which

haunted me with a special and gracious persistency. But I tore up the leaf; not less in regret at my inability, as with a sudden sense of reproof for a kind of sacrilege. No, it was not for me to record what I had heard! Did I try to commit to ink a few measures I seemed to find myself each instant forgetting more than I remembered; so presently I gave over attempting to write the music down. Now I would not try to write it, not for worlds! I hardly feel that I do right to tell the story; telling comes so short of the thing itself! Dream, was it? Perhaps so. Call it so, if you prefer. But as dream or translation of spirit, I am glad indeed for all of it; very glad, my dear Stephen—my dear Eldred! For, somehow I have gathered from what was given me, during those strange instants—heaven-hours, perhaps—a certitude of reconciliation of whatever stands for a quarrel between art and the soul's good; a glance, I believe, into mortal art's relationship with perfecter phases, art's supreme types with our poor efforts; an instant's inlook—outlook—into art's past, present, future, which I fear can be but vaguely communicated to others. But having had such intimation, it must at least be my own care and case that I am not 'disobedient unto the heavenly vision.' "

"I doubt if Mrs. Browning is read as much now-a-days as she used to be. I suspect not. But every now and then, in her poems, you'll find a thought well worth thinking, hid even in pages that are often too emotional-rhetorical. She didn't leave all the great psychic suggestions, in the field of aesthetics, to my old school-friend Robert. In "Aurora Leigh," there occurs the expression of an

idea closely bearing on what I have been describing to-night. Have you the book at hand, Stephen? No, no, never mind a light! I can repeat the passage. It runs thus: "

" Every natural flower which grows on earth
Implies a flower upon the spiritual side,
Substantial, archetypal, all aglow
With blossoming causes—not so far away
But we whose spirit-sense is somewhat cleared,
May catch at something of the bloom and breath—
Too vaguely apprehended, though indeed
Still apprehended, consciously or not,
And still transferred to picture, music, verse,
For thrilling audient and beholding souls,
By signs and touches which are known to souls.
How known, they know not; why, they cannot find:
So straight call out on genius; say, " A man
Produced this! " when much rather they should say,
" 'Tis insight, and he saw this! " Thus is art
Self-magnified in magnifying a truth
Which, fully recognized, would change the world,
And shift its morals. If a man could feel,
Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,
But every day—least, last, or working-day—
The spiritual significance burn through
The hieroglyphic of material shows,
Henceforward he would paint the globe with wings,
And reverence fish and fowl, the bull, the tree,
And even his very body as a man!... "

.

Father Davenant had finished. For some time the three friends sat in silence. Eldred was as still as Stephen. Indeed it was with a very gentle

abruptness that he said anon, "Thank you, Father, very, very much for what you have told us this evening. I shall think over it, believe me—often. Often."

And so speaking, Eldred shook hands in good-night, and left the still, old house.





(TO MISS MARIE C. JERMAIN)

UNBIDDEN

[*Another Dream-Story*]

" Is that you, over there, Latimer ? "

Latimer started and looked up. It was a clear, and windless autumn evening, not cold—the night of All-Souls. Latimer was returning from posting a letter in the village. He had walked on, up the long street, musing. The voice was an interruption, but he knew its source.

Sure enough, Dr. Bond had spoken. The Doctor was standing in the open window of his library, a room so immediately overlooking the street that the passer-by could be hailed from it, in a conversational tone. The Doctor's friends often were saluted so.

" Come in awhile, if you are not in a hurry," said the Doctor, hospitably. The young man replied, " All right ! " and turned into the gate.

" You are keeping rather a vigil ? " he asked as he crossed the threshold of the dim, pleasant room, and shook hands with his old friend.

" An early one. It is only eleven o'clock. You have done with work for to-night ? "

" Yes, I've been down street, to mail my proofs. I thought the stars better than books; so I took my time in coming back. What are you toiling over ? Oh, I see—that ' New Anæsthetics ' article."

The old man and the young one spoke of indifferent matters, for a few moments. Latimer noted that the Doctor's mood was one more of silence than speech. He suspected that Bond would not have called him, had he not cared particularly for companionship, however disinclined for conversation.

"Serious thoughts, Doctor?" asked Latimer, half-playfully, half-seriously. The Doctor hesitated; then replied slowly after a suggestive pause:

"Yes, serious thoughts, Frank!"

"Of what sort?"

"Of quite special sort. Indeed I wonder if I ought to break a long confidence with myself, in uttering them. Still—I think I will do just that, since you are here. For, I have had in mind to tell you to-night part of the history of a past self, a self which seems to me the individuality of another man; quite out of any relation with myself of to-day. An *ego* now so divorced as to be almost incredible—and a horror! But still it was I!"

"Your past self? Surely it must have been much the same as Dr. Bond here to-night? A horror? Come now! Impossible that sort of a predecessor; for it will always have been something in key with you!"

"Not necessarily! I shall prove that fact soon, Latimer, by telling you of what I have been reviewing; a matter known to few. First, however—I have been meditating on an anniversary! It comes to my mind to-night."

"An anniversary of at least some degree of pleasure, I hope?" Latimer spoke a little timidly now, in growing surprise.

"No, one of pain; yet also of mercy, as of mystery. Do not be startled, Frank! To-night, sitting here alone, I have been recalling a time in which I, a man known to you and to so many others, as prosperous and respected, rejoicing in my family-life, my friends, my busy career, my success—blessed, too, with a clear head and a "reasonable sense" of my duty toward existence, I hope—when that former, far-away I deliberately made up my mind to throw away this life! To commit suicide! Yes!—and even undertook that fateful act!"

"To commit suicide? You? Impossible!" Indeed Latimer could hardly believe his ears.

"Altogether possible, friend. For, it was in an untoward epoch, when I was wholly willing to toss away this existence, as only a useless and tyrannous imprisonment. All in me was revolt, contempt, despair and bewilderment! Surely I tried to carry out my resolve; was near succeeding! But from it I was withheld, Frank—do not smile, my dear boy!—by a merciful and scarcely describable dream! Nothing more or less! A dream; yet such a dream!"

"Doctor, it seems incomprehensible!" Latimer said in a low voice. For many years, these two men had been close friends, discounting difference of ages, each knowing so well the other. And now this disconcertingly new aspect of one of them!

"Perhaps it will not seem so incomprehensible, when I tell you how the incident came about, Frank," said Bond. "Remember that it is the story of a man really quite another I; personally and professionally. To such earlier man came the sullen, sinister temptation; and a deliverance. I will give you the

chapter. Or should I call it a sermon? It has always remained in my mind as a mysteriously spiritual incident. You shall see what it appears to you."

II.

"I had recently started into a business, one that now is long ago laid by—thank Heaven! I had accepted it unwillingly as my avocation in life, at the bitter sacrifice of all hopes of what has been, during so long a time, my professional career. My little inheritance was involved in my then success or failure. I was unmarried; but I was head over heels in love with a woman placed far beyond me, by her social position and fortune. My health had suffered severely from a chronic malady; all at once it was a subject of grave apprehension to me, though that fact was unknown to my very few friends. I was living in the city, at a second-rate hotel, in comfortless poverty-pinched bachelorhood. I was nothing to nobody, nobody anything to me, of all the world about me daily. You remember how it was that I had no intimate relatives. Indeed existence so far had been anything but a saunter across green fields and flowery meadows."

"But there came a day when I was absolutely ruined, all in a breath, by a financial crash. My heaviest creditor, a man that I never had met, nor had wished to meet, was notoriously intolerant; also, as I had learned, he held some grossly false notions of my character. That very morning, a physician—a specialist—had taken occasion to examine me. He

had said only ominous things, as the result. During all that hard week, a 'society item' in the newspapers, was the announcement of the engagement of Miss X—, to a rich young aspirant. I thought things over. My point of view was purely selfish. The world was clearly against me! Life was a failure! No one was interested in that conclusion, except myself! I had a right to curse God and to die! I had a right to give over this 'living!'—And so I would do!"

"Hence it came about, at a quarter past ten o'clock that evening—ah, Lafiner, it seems incredible to recall it!—that I sat at a table in my room in the hotel. Three or four necessary last letters were written. My trunk was packed, for being forwarded to an acquaintance. A little pistol, loaded, was lying close at my hand, on the dingy cloth. At ten-thirty, on the stroke, I proposed to put that pistol to my swimming head, to blow my brains out. The door was locked, cracks were stuffed, to confine the sound of the discharge within my remote and detached room. One letter was yet to be finished. So, with aching head, I bent confusedly over the page."

"It was a murky, autumn night. Through the open window came the pounding and clinking of a gang of men in the street below, repairing nocturnally some outburst of the water-pipes. Thump, thump—clink, clink!... Would I succeed in getting through with that last line of an envelope to be addressed?... It was already ten twenty-five! Concentration and resolution were telling on me, especially as I had eaten nothing all day. Those outside sounds and the light grew all at once indistinct together. My head

declined across the page. With my hand touching the pistol, I fell into a sudden unconsciousness, half-sleep, half-coma."

III.

"It seemed to me, gradually, that I stood, panting, agitated, exhausted by some violent physical and mental shock, in semi-darkness—somewhere. I knew, or thought I knew, just what had happened; I had abandoned the envelope, I had caught up the weapon—my earthly life was over!"

"But I was a little disconcerted to realize immediately that, wherever I was, it was still *I* who was there! *I*—nobody else! *I*, with just the same consciousness of my own existence, with quite my own sense of my mortal past, with just my same attitudes toward emotion, thought, right, wrong and their consequences. These were the first sensations in my mind. They were not agreeable, I hardly could have said why. I felt disappointed, cheated, disturbed. Yes, *I* was there; all of my usual self—apart from bodily encumbrances. If so, pray, what was I to do with myself?... I had anticipated meeting—well, some sort of agency; new, but immediately appreciable as a moral agency, lower or higher. I had expected a greeting, interrogations, a rebuke, a direction, something—at once. Not so! Here seemed to be only space, silence, coldness, twilight; the dimness of an unknown and open atmospheric territory; a vibrationless state of existence. For an interval, that was all."

"But presently I realized that I had begun to

78 walk onward, or was doing what corresponded to
80 personal locomotion. Therewith, I suddenly began
to trace out, in increasing light and clearness of
vision, a great scenic surrounding, in various planes
of perspective and distance ; a landscape, a mountain-
territory. Shadowy at first, but vast and of surpassing
majesty, it became definite. A highway was under
my feet ; an avenue, broad, straight, and of apparently
indefinite continuance. Evidently some initial decree
had set me down into the very middle of that road
into the Unknown. But when I looked back—ah, I
could see nothing ! A wall of darkness closed behind
me, at even a few paces in the rear. Forward
I must go. Each score of steps brought clearer
prospects. Behind me lay that absolute gloom,
deathly silence ! Forward therefore did I continue."

" Presently figures began to flit hurriedly by me.
I could not discern faces or costumes, in the diffusive
half-light. I tried to intercept the first comer, the
second, the third. Each eluded me. Now I called
out, called loudly, in my ordinary voice, as it seemed,
and in my own tongue. I was not heeded !... The
brightness of the scene increased. A dazzling vista—
radiant mountains and meadows of limpid colours,
swift streams of aetherial luence, a succession
of far, towering cities, all now came forth to my
sight, in limitless panorama. Ever and again sped
by me forms of men and women, unrecognizably
brilliant in this new and evidently celestial atmo-
sphere ; personages often majestic beyond de-
scription. Alas, how they looked at me—some of
them ! The look was almost constantly the same—
one of pitying curiosity, I thought—unless varied

by quick aversion. Again and again I addressed those passers—peremptorily now. They gazed at me coldly, fearfully, with repugnance; they listened, but gave no other sign of interest, in return. Evidently they did not understand even my distraught countenance. Were they, or was I—of the dead? Of the unintelligible, voiceless, unhearing dead?"

"And now on either side of the way, as I advanced toward some common centre of what I realized must be Heavenly activity, I began to encounter most perplexing incidents and objects. I recall them now only in the most general way. There were occupations in progress that seemed *there* quite ordinary and familiar; salutations, movements, interests, actions, psychical and physical phenomena, all which seemed quite normal in that new sphere whereinto I had come. But I could make nothing of them! I remarked everywhere evidences of perfectly unfamiliar emotions, lighter or deeper, as sprung from reasons that I could not read into, though before my eyes. Objects were visible, as the result of workmanship, natural or artificial, which I could not guess nor analyze, in materials, construction or purposes. Here and there were splendors of ornament, on principles incomprehensible to me, at which I stared with astonishment, while I was hastened past them."

"I was already in a condition of agitated curiosity and alarm that I recall more definitely than the things themselves. For, my situation meant that all around me was unfolding, quite as a matter of common course there, a vast, terrifically new phase of life; of life growing nearer to a perfection,

of sentient existence; one—as it were—nearer to a life with God; its factors unrestrained by accidents of time and space; free from earthly mechanical laws; beyond the poor capacities of humanity for learning and utilizing."

"But to me, to me, it was all becoming, in this involuntary progress through it, a maddening riddle, a divine chaos, of which I could make only jargon! I could not grasp even the most superficial elements, when somewhat open to my comprehension. If this all became much more novel and wonderful, what could I do? Not endure it! A sudden, intense intellectual stress and agony were settling on me!"

"No look, no word, from those I still met, were vouchsafed, to define a logical accord of my present situation with that act by which I had entered it; none to tell me where I was and whither being sped. No clear sign of interest in my presence was shown. *What had I to do here?* What had these innumerable, glorious, busy beings to do with me? Nothing, it would seem!... Had the soul in death a certain volition? Possessed it, in the instant of its departure from the mortal frame, an alternative? Had my erring spirit blundered, stumbled into a world not meant for it? The strain of amazement and doubt grew horrible as I faced even those preliminary queries of that Unknown around me."

"I began to weep aloud, I stretched forth my hands piteously to all I met. I begged, with voice and tears and gestures, that I could be informed of *where* I was, of how much further I must pass unto that Beyond. Only to know so much, or so little, as that! Useless appeals! A calm, uncomprehend-

ing look was the most that I could win. None appeared to understand my signs or words."

"And now what I may term the suburban phase of external things was changing. In a greater fear and a certain new despair, forgotten all emotions of my last days, hours and moments on earth—I realized two new probabilities. First, that all which I had beheld hitherto was as nothing compared with yet higher phases of what I can call an immortal civilization and culture, about to be unfolded in new degrees to me, with my actual entrance into the nearest of the busy communities to which I felt myself inevitably approaching. And besides that conviction, all at once I guessed that what I had witnessed so far, to perplex me, related primarily only to the intellectual. To the divinely intellectual, but not to intellect at all intimately as part of the spiritual. That last element was the one that should now succeed! I felt certain that in what I would next encounter, I would be set face to face with abstractly *spiritual* problems; with developments of holiness, manifestations of rarefied psychic-ethic essences, as nothing before them had set me; that I would realize, with irresistible significance, a soul-life of the Kingdom of God. But even this new, awful thought was not all! For, I was convinced that if this was the beginning of—dared I, wretched, impious and still mundane creature, frame the word?—Heaven, then here was truly but a province of Heaven! It was even now only in a border-territory, on the lower rounds of an awful, endless stairway; on the edges and exfluents of communities in the higher Celestial State! What then must be its more perfected degrees?"

" Oh, if my part and allotment in this new phase of Life, to which I had called myself, whither I had sped unasked by Almighty God—His name I could not bear to think now!—seemed so humiliating, so infinitesimal, so negative!—what then would it be, when by tacit toleration, I might come yet nearer to His essential, centrifugal spirituality?

" I could endure no more! It seemed to me that I fell on my face, in utter abasement, crying out brokenly, ' Endure me not, O my God! Receive me not! Send me away from even thus much of Thy presence! Annihilate me forever! This endurance of me is worse than any other punishment! It is anguish and distress and shame, all unbearable! Let me not go thus toward Thee—if unto Thee I go?—in a blind, terrified ignorance! Let me not pass on thus useless in any Higher Life, ignored by all that I behold, and essay to grasp! This can be but the mere beginning of Thyself; only the outlines of Thy Kingdom, only the remoter life of Thy Blessed, the suburbs of Thy Being. What am I but an idiot, who can understand naught if Thou openest not his mind, and makest it able to contain even a part of Thyself about me?—even were it to be only that little which it cannot now contain! Not in intellectual ignorance only do I implore. For, O the pure in heart shall see thee; and I have been a creature whose fitness for Thy Presence none but Thyself, phase by phase, could compass. In my haste, I have destroyed my chance of development toward Thee! I have cut short Thy patient tutelage! Oh, foolish, miserable I!.. Ah, if by any clemency, I may be translated once more, back

into that earthly state—which seemed to me so slight, so right to leave—let me return to it! There do Thou load me with miseries, there increase my years in mortal misfortunes and sufferings! Nay, bid me be sent into anything worse—to anywhere! But do this, in granting that I have a right truly to enter into what is about me; shall be able to use my reason, poor as it is; may be capable of a part; can strive, with the sense of being even dimly known to Thee and Thine, watched, controlled and led! Such grace for me, wheresoever I may be; rather than to find myself, as now, cast into this dumb horror and shame of coming a little nearer to Thee when I am unbidden!

“‘Unbidden!’ exclaimed a grave voice compassionately, ‘Unbidden indeed! Therein—oh, thou, who grovellest and writhest here!—therein lies all thy fault—thy folly—thy penalty!’”

IV.

“I looked up. That radiant prospect which had surrounded me had absolutely vanished. I was crouching on the ground, with a cloudiness, a sunless haze, about me. I clearly remember the sense of relief, on finding myself enclosed away from all that new, superabundant, mysterious activity of existence; the comfort of finding myself motionless, of hearkening to speech that I understood, from one who evidently could comprehend me. A personage was gazing down after me compassionately. I recall him only vaguely, however—as only vaguely I recall much else.”

" ' For, all thy mistake—poor, erring, assuredly human creature that thou still art!—thou hast expressed in that word—' *unbidden!* ' "

" He paused; then continued (you must remember, Frank, that I cannot give with exactitude all that he said): ' Listen! Thy fault has been great! I judge it not! I measure it not! For I am not He who doth that. Unto Himself shalt thou answer therefor, in His time. But, oh, man!—whatever Perfect Justice shall exact further from thee of punishment, or whatsoever shall Perfect Goodness remit to thee of blame hereafter, surely it must seem to thee now that nothing can be worse, nothing more intolerable to thee and to thy like, than coming, without His summons, even these few steps nearer to Him! Thou *hast* so come! Therefore art thou one ignorant, terrified, useless, placeless! Therefore art thou forever incapable of taking the simplest part here in Heavenly concerns; too untaught to enter into even our least wonderfulness; shut out of comprehending, enjoying, working—helping! The divine chain in thy long intellectual and spiritual existence thou hast broken on earth, by one link! Only by one! But it suffices! Oh fool!—if thou hadst but waited, and so hadst not come here—*unbidden!* ' "

" ' Ask not thyself what difference the brief span of human life, and of thy continuance for a time longer within the narrow horizons of mortality, may make in man's advent into such existence as is this. It must be enough that thy Ruler did not send for thee! For, *then* a place surely would have been prepared for thee! Thy guides and instructors

would all have been in glad readiness. Now is there for thee neither any place nor any tutor! Thou hast come—unbidden! And for thee thus come, unasked and unready, can here exist no pleasure, knowledge, honour, peace, progress—nothing! Nothing! Thy thoughts, emotions, untuned from earth, are not understood here. Thy speech and signs are as foolish, clumsy, meaningless riddles here. None met thee at the Beginning, to tell thee what all summoned hither first must know. Thou art in a maze without clue. Be then to thyself the punishment! Wander on and on, in bewilderment! Wander on and on, in a circle that is already misery, and which shall grow soon tenfold, to a perfect torture.' "

" ' So, too, is it with any who come hither as thou didst—unbidden. Their approaches we prevent not—alas! Would we might so do—but we may not! We cannot close the door, it stays open. Many such rash intruders as thyself enter. What thou meetest now is the first and lightest of thy Creator's chastisements for those who usurp His call, who intercept His decree. Thousands on thousands, like thyself, thou couldst have discerned about thee in thy progress to me, were such as ye all are permitted to discover each other. Aye, there are many unasked guests—like thyself! And all are in a wretchedness equal to thine—or greater.' "

" I shuddered, still bowed before him. He went on: "

" ' What art thou like, oh, thou who hast hurried from thy appointed life!—unless to some raw schoolboy of thine own dull earth, who runs away from tutors and tasks, and finds his way back to

his father's home, still untrained in the ways and thoughts and speech of men and women who fill the mansion—he, a mocking and a burden, an hourly discredit, or as naught to himself and his parentage! Only a few years more, and the youth might so well come there, in honour and gladness, to take his share of welcome and of home. Seest thou the likeness? I believe that thou discernest thy fault. Blind, rash mortal, know also this from me! In another matter thou mayest err; Almighty God knoweth that thou art here, being as one of that miserable legion who would take the Kingdom of Heavenly Life by their violence. He knoweth of ye! But none of ye shall draw nearer to Him!—not one shall ever be more in His vicinage, until the Day! Woe to thee! Woe eternal to thee! And woe eternal to all who cross to us—unbidden! ”

“ ‘Have mercy! Tell me what—’ ”

“ My own voice awakened me. Alive, gasping, strangling with my tears, I realised that I was yet on this earth. I started up. My hand dashed the pistol to the carpet. It exploded, harmlessly. As it did so, as I stood there in the tumult of emotions surcharging my being, and startled by the report, the clock struck the half-hour. Ten-thirty! All that which had seemed so foreign to mortal existence, so new and maddening in its spiritual course, had consumed not hours, scarcely minutes, or even mere seconds! ”

“ But Latimer, what a change had come to me! The experience, define it as you please, had an effect of which no question was possible. I confess that I would believe that there was more than vagrant

dream in it... I trembled as I stood there—thinking. The pistol's sound, fortunately, attracted no attention in the increased noise from the street—was lost by the retirement of my room. I listened tremblingly, for some time. Then I returned from the door. Ah, that night!... When daylight came, it lighted up a world thenceforth a new one to me. I had come back to mortal life, to live it out, as not valued before I "

V.

The Doctor had finished. Latimer, raised his head.

" You don't attempt to—to—explain ? " he asked softly.

" Explain ? Too deep a word, Frank ! What do we mortals ever ' explain ? ' No, call it a strange and potential dream ! After all, is it not enough to think it so ? For what are dreams ? Who knows ? "

Bond was silent ; then added :

" As a dream, it did its work. But I ought to add that there began with it, as in coincidence, something else not at all a dream—a chain of remarkable and kindly occurrences for me. The outset came in my first interview with that much-dreaded principal creditor of mine, in course of the next day. With an unexpectedly happy turn there, I started into a successful career—so I can call it—including entrance, after awhile, into a professional life that I have so happily led. Of any such succeeding occurrences, however, I need not speak. I merely wish to impress on you that timely and mysterious lesson. The Giver of life and death,

of existences for spiritual growth, has other instruments for our sudden tuition than mortal accidents and swiftly fatal diseases. To my latest hour, I shall carry with me an awe of this life as an essential preface, an enjoined and indispensable school to its latest moment ; shall keep in my soul forever a solemn and definite sense of responsibility in this phase toward—our next one. But note, pray, that my conviction is associated with no special theology, my dear Latimer—is part of no set creed ; I merely feel what it may mean to leave this world if we do so—unbidden. More—much more—I doubt not, is to be learned By-and-By. But in that one word ‘unbidden’ now lies for me an awful monition ; which I think is accordant with at least some spiritual probabilities, fit to be accepted by all the troubled and impatient of this world. Ah, never, let us try to go hence ‘unbidden!’ ”

There was a pause. Then, “ I can’t thank you enough, Doctor ! ” said Latimer, earnestly ; and, presently with a hearty handshake, he slipped out into the starlit night.



(TO THE REVEREND WILLIAM PRALL, D. D.)

A PRISONER PASSES

*"Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia
traham ad meipsum."...*

[*The manuscript, obviously imperfect, like many
of more value, begins abruptly on a torn leaf, thus :*]

... And I swear to you, by the helmet of Mars, Rutilius, that what with my anger and what with the confusion of the crowd outside, I could at first see nothing. I slammed the door at my back with the cackle of the old eunuch in my ears, "Ei, ei, ei!—There he goes!—another plucked goose!" Fitly said of me, Hilarius Gela, called the Never-Lucky! Again it was true! Out of all that pocketful of money, I had now not a beggarly silver-piece and nobody would help me back to the Prætorium on credit, you may be certain! How contemptible, thought I, was Decius to tell such a barefaced lie!—to hurry away when luck began turning against him and that blackleg Greek, Thyotes! They had plundered me of every valuable!—taking my rings too! As for any truth in what Decius Lallius had said, as he folded up that message, about a sending after *him*, by my uncle, because of the muddle over the Nazarene, and about the high-priests, and the gods know who not besides—why, that I admit I did not believe for a moment. Or, supposing my uncle had sent for Decius? Like as not, Decius had

managed to get word to him first, that he might be so called away! Three hundred—no, four hundred! Think of that, Rutilius! And I shall not win a denarius back—Decius Lallius has gone mad, with the rest of them. But that I will get to later.

Well, there was a diabolical dust blowing, and a stench, and the sun hot was enough to scorch. I elbowed and shoved my way out of the alley, jamming to the wall the Jews and everyone else because..... When I came as far along as the angle of Ezra the Publican's house, I had met enough sour looks to make me sorry for making way alone through that quarter of the town, on such a morning. Thought I, "One other fellow beside me, and my sword-handle not loose, we could lay about us—stir up some sport in a trice!" But scarcely armed, and alone, it was not safe. So I stomached much insolence, and made the best haste I could.

All of a sudden, however, I heard something like trumpets, just as I turned the corner of the long street whereon lives Mariamne, that squat little Jewess who accused your cousin Varus of filching her sapphire bracelet—you recollect? Said I to myself, "That sounds like Decius Lallius, after all!" So although the throng, all conditions of men, women, and children, grew close, I tried to get over to the square, to meet whatever might be coming towards it. But I had difficulty. In a twinkling, with the louder sound of the trumpets, and the notion that a procession of some sort was passing, those near me began to prick up their long ears, and to stare and to question; and then—whisk! right and left after the show! A fat Pharisee, or Jew I took

to be such—certainly have seen before—became a real battering-ram ahead of me, I sped close behind his back. Such a scramble! Next, we leaped upon a bale of stuffs before a shop, where stood two Israelite girls, one of them on tiptoe of her pretty feet, gazing with all her black eyes, into the square. So I stared, too; and I saw, over the heads of the streetful, a compact mob, bearing down toward the centre of the square. In the middle, legionaries sure enough! I caught the glitter of helmets and spears, and a flutter of scarlet from cloaks and hair-plumes. And by Mars!—there sat on his horse Decius Lallius himself! For once, he spoken the truth! I caught also a glimpse, even from where I was, of two or three criminals being fetched along. What I aimed to do was to get Decius's eye. So down from my bale I jumped, with a slap on the back to the taller of my two wenches; and hard after my big Pharisee again!—whom I nevertheless lost. I darted into an unfinished dwelling, sprang up a narrow staircase, and clambered out on the top of a wing, where stood two masons, looking down. The squad, with the prisoners and mob—constantly growing larger and noisier—these all were advancing straight toward my halting-place, as I had hoped. Indeed, they must pass almost below me.

So, keeping my eye, like a viper's, fastened upon Decius Lallius, as along he came, with the legionaries, I put my hands about my mouth, and bawled out, "Decius! Ho! Decius Lallius!" Finally I made him look up at me. I shook my fist at him, held up the emptied purse, and pointed to the split sword-handle. He laughed so loud that I heard him above

all the bustle. He threw back that big, impudent head of his, and snapped the fingers of one hand, and nodded, and called something or other to me, and then he flung a gold piece straight at me, and I caught it !.....

I could not help laughing. It was all so like Decius Lallius ! So—good-humor was again between us. I would have to believe that it was no pretext that took him off from Mardocheus's place—after all ! A train of camels blocked the way ; and while his men paused for a moment, Lallius pointed his finger at his three criminals, and I made out that he would have me look hard at them, being now so near.

The three stood quietly, each a little separated from his fellows. Each had a white board hung before his breast, whereon was written his doings—I forget whether your Alexandrian habit is such. The foremost of them looked a stout, low-browed, black-locked fellow, all rags and grease and dirt—thief and murderer writ all over him ; no table needed to his performances. (At present, the commonness of highway robbery in Judea is intolerable. Nothing puts it down...) The next man was also a highwayman, but of different type. He could scarcely have been older than four-and-twenty. His gold hair was like the sun, and he had blue eyes—or I guessed so. He was jesting with the crowd nearest him. Still, somebody told me afterward that he was a strong young thief, one never to be taken alive, save for a false sweetheart ; who betrayed him, I suppose, after he had thrown away his soul on her !

But naturally it was at the famous Nazarene that I looked most sharply. This business of cruci-

fixion displeases me, just as often as it comes under my eyes; and I am not too soft-hearted, Rutilius, as you are aware. With the blockade of the camel-train, the Nazarene had contrived to stand nearly upright, and to turn himself around. He was saying something to a knot of women, who squeezed forward from the crowd. Of course, I could not hear his words; and, as he spoke them, a handful of rotted fruit struck him on the neck; so he turned and became silent. Then he remained immovable, with his eyes raised to the sky, as if he had been one of our own philosophers or poets, supplicating Jove to look down, to judge if he were righteously in such gear. Or perhaps to bestow upon him an indifference of the gods toward the behavior of our contemptible, purposeless, unliftable, unchangeable race of mankind!

Our friend Thyron would be glad to give one of his eyes, I think, if he could, with the help of the other, commit that Nazarene's countenance to canvas! I swear it, Rutilius, by the divinities of Styx! You have heard of the man's odd—quite Jewish beauty. One story, that I know Quintus told you..... The fellow could hardly stand—I saw that. I have since heard that they beat him desperately, before the outsetting of Lallius; and the German cohort are a wild set. The man's hair, which was exceedingly thick, was a mat of blood and sweat; filth adhered to it and his beard. His wrists had been cut by the cords. Once, when he chanced to move his arm, the sleeve fell back; from where I was, aloft, I could discern livid bruises on it. But such an arm! It was fine as of a statue! And the contour of his head! His garments were bloody, bedraggled,

and stained with vile things cast upon him. He carried not the beams of his cross, like the rest. I was told that he could not, from the weakness that had come on him, after his handling during the night. I saw another Jew staggering on with them, to the sport of the troop, which had pressed him into service..... Also, as near as might be, was another Jew, quite young, not more than nineteen or twenty years old, a marvellous lad as to looks, though with a face of agony that.....

Rutilius, despite his plight, there dwelt in the Nazarene lunatic's countenance a beauty that I have beheld in no statuary's work! He stooped from exhaustion; it was as if a god bent in compassion over all our earth! At no instant the crowd stilled; it roared vileness, it hustled the troop, the soldiery swore at the camel-drivers. But this Nazarene was as one who hearkens to the lyres and pipes of the Elysian meadows, beholding from far the choric dances of spirits. I affirm to you that there were mysteries in the aspect of this poor fanatic, whatever he be rated by those concerning themselves about him, which I assuredly have not much done; veritable mysteries, transcending those of Eleusis!... One of the two masons, a humpback, who stood beside me on the cornice, hurled a fragment of mortar, to make him glance our way. He did so. But when he looked it was, I fancied, directly at me, not at the humpback! And then, Rutilius, what think you I either experienced, or now imagine that I did?

It seemed—by the helmet of Mars!—I know not how to tell it, I feel like a fool as I begin

—it seemed to me as if he demanded of me—of me, Hilarius Gela—"Wherefore hast *thou* brought me to this hour? It is thou thyself that hast done it! *Thou!*" And thereupon appeared it also to me that all, all my life began flashing before me! Yea, every hour of it, since I came to know that I lived! The days of our boyhood in Rome—the months you and I rambled in Sicily—those swift marches in Pannonian campaigns, under the wide night! Those evenings in Gaul, when we lay upon our backs, beneath the pine-trees, and watched the stars! All that I have been, or done, or thought, or hoped, or despaired of, behold, I reviewed the same! And when the man's lids fell again, over eyes that so had sought out *me*, Hilarius Gela, I swear that I trembled!—I stood there, with my jaw fallen! These effects must be of his wizardry. It is certain that he hath Powers that attend him—often. From a fish's mouth he once drew a purse full of gold.

But all at once the camels passed by. Decius Callius bawled at his troop, and it was set in motion. Thieves and Nazarene and all moved onward. The crowd set up a louder hoot than ever, and the place was cleared of idlers. I watched the throng turn from the square, and mount the hill. This Jerusalem is all hill; in the part where I was there is more dirt than pavement. Once more, I saw the troop halt, and Decius checked his horse. Afterward I heard that a young madman burst through the crowd amid the legionaries, and fell foaming and cursing at the Nazarene's feet. The Nazarene spake something; and, they say, the boy was himself—sane and calm and well! Heard one ever the like? Then the

worst part of the crowd having gone with the squad and prisoners, I went down to the street, and got to the guard-room, without much annoyance.

But all the way, Rutilius, went I marveling and laughing, in spite of what I had felt for the instant of the Nazarene's look, that any man should nowadays believe anything stoutly enough to die therefor! Oh, folly indeed! For we come we know not whence, and we go into black darkness, and the gods have become in our day, oh, my Rutilius, mere shameful or silly tales. Truth is nowhere, and the world is a tiresome and old matter altogether. What is there left in this trash called life, that a man, searching out the same, can set it apart and say of it, "This is excellent"? To eat, to drink, to fight, to win at dice, to answer the sparkle in a bright eye or the pouting on red lips—so must man sum up all good he can have here; and the hereafter is of poets. The world is all as empty as laughter; and of that in it which accords ill with man's joy is there aught really worth tears? Ah, would that some new god might approach from the unknown, saying to you, to me, "*Wherefore do ye live, unless it be for—look!—these and these things?—not known to ye till now.*"


But I behold your face wrinkled with smiles, as of old, and I hear your cry, "Inconsistent as ever!" He speaks now after the manner of the philosophers who rant worst." I doubt not I do, oh, my Rutilius—who alone knowest that I have a thought, one of another day in the year, that may outweigh a handful of myrtle, or a tress of Nereia, or a swallow of Massecum—would I had many an amphora of it by me for there is none fit for my drinking here!...

..... To conclude, then, the account of that day, and to begin the stranger tale, of Decius Lallius, I assure you that what with the turmoil of this Hebrew Passover—that you know something of—for which Jerusalem was now concerned, and what with the spread of the story of the Nazarene's condemnation, the city grew into a worse ferment every hour. Verus and I, you must know, had been examining accounts, for Pontius Pilatus's signature; but my uncle was ill all that day; he would do no business till nightfall..... There ran into the room a legionary with a letter. It was from Decius Lallius, at the place of the Nazarene's execution. I tried to make it out. The afternoon had suddenly become dark, in the most unaccountable manner.....

Here breaks off the narration of Hilarius Gela. Nothing continuative is extant. But to the single copy I have here transcribed, in the Library of the Confrimanda, at Rome, which library has more out-of-the-way matters in it than many think, is appended this note, in another hand; probably an extract from some early martyrology:

"... At this same time of persecution in Rome, suffered Decius Lallius and Hilarius Gela. Now, this Decius Lallius had formerly been a centurion, the same who stood guard beside the Cross; and Hilarius Gela was his dear friend, equally zealous for the faith, and as abundant in all good works; being, it is said, a nephew of Pontius Pilate. And with these two also joyfully suffered a certain Rutilius, of Alexandria, a kinsman of one of them."





(TO MISS MARIE M. STEVENSON)

ELEK'S RELIGION.

" GOD IS SUPERIOR TO ALL THINGS, BUT NEVER
EXTERIOR TO ANYTHING " — (*Herrera*).

" THERE LIES MORE FAITH IN HONEST DOUBT,
BELIEVE ME, THAN IN HALF YOUR CREEDS."
(*Tennyson*)

BÉLA seated himself on an old bench, under an oak, on the edge of the little village of Felka, up in North Hungary. In one hand he held his stout walking-stick, in the other was his hat and a letter, yet unopened, from his friend Elek Vida, in Budapest. The chain of the High Tatra peaks, towering onward a few miles away, in all gradations of dark green, bronze and amethyst, against the limpid azure of the afternoon sky, did not distract Béla's eyes or thoughts toward mere Nature. Deeper concerns were busying him—even just what would be the contents of the thick letter from Elek, which he had brought hither, on his walk from the village post-office, to be perused in that serene solitude.

Béla had a serious face, for a young man; also a serious mind. He belonged to an old Protestant family, such as are plentiful in his country to-day; a family that had been dwellers during many generations in that stronghold of Hungarian Evangelical truth, N—. With numerous pastors before him, in his family-line, Béla himself was a highly-

concentrated theological student and "candidatus," in the N— Seminary. His convictions and life-work had been long-time settled, by him and for him. He had a quiet, comfortable sense that spiritual geography, for him, as for everybody else, was mapped out on certitudes not to be refuted. His coming career of preacher and guide to mankind, concerned with souls in this world and in the world to come, he regarded as based on the firmest of superhuman authority. Certainly if any such enlightenment and warrant ever had existed, or ever could exist, N— Seminary possessed and conveyed it.

Now, Elek Vida had been Béla's dearest friend, almost from early boyhood. Separation of daily life had not diminished their affection; but in course of recent years had come forward, more or less disconcertingly, the intellectual and temperamental contrasts between the two young men. And therewith mightily did it distress Béla, good fellow—he with so much religion!—that, little by little, Elek seemed to have no religion at all! Yet Elek once had had plenty of religion—perhaps too much. For, to begin with the questions of quantity and quality, Elek had strong Catholic blood in his veins. He had been brought up attentively as to faith, by an old uncle, the eminent Dékan R—, in Esztergom. Moreover, Elek, an adolescent, had been duly confirmed in the Catholic fold; a devout youth as even was. But presently had come Elek's university-years in England. Then and later, various psychic cross-currents had drifted him about. Gradually, Elek's more sober-souled friends, some of

them personages in the Magyar hierarchy, had come to shaking their heads about him. Certainly it was now hard to say what that clever young man really believed or disbelieved! Nowadays Elek seemed to dismiss—politely, oh, quite politely—all religions! Calm and dreadful negations of dogmas and creeds openly were heard from him, now and then, when Béla or somebody else grew controversial. Elek casually admitted harbouring “scientific—” anarchistic—notions as to any sort of faiths—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Greek or what else, old or new—ideas that much grieved and alarmed Béla. Also Elek seemed to be perfectly at ease in his reticence; or to take pleasure, now and then, in amiably arraigning all Christianity, by a phrase, here and there; accusing it, casually but particularly, of such deficiencies—intellectual and theological and practical—that one would have said that Elek seemed to invite a sort of coroner’s inquest over a quite deceased spiritual delinquent! Elek had a whole library-full of subversive philosophies, works by authours “modernistic,” speculative, comparative, and the like, who to Béla were as so many Baedekers of Darkness. Exponents of New Christianity, of Intellectualism, in or against faith, of Higher Criticism of the Bible—tranquil analysts of Buddhism, Shintoism, Parseeism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism; volumes by Kant, Spinoza, Fichte, Voltaire, Haeckel, Huxley, Comte, Spencer, Darwin, Strauss, Renan, Loisy, and so on—they were all there. It was saddening—it was terrible!

Perhaps worse still, Elek lately would not

argue with Béla. If Béla began, Elek now made just one or another subversive or critical observation—nearly always referring to writers whose books Béla had never read, and would not read for the world, not he!—and changed the topic. Or else Elek would give a cheerful laugh, and say, "Oh, now there, old man! Suppose we talk of something else—something that we know a bit about—eh?" So altogether it was no wonder that all Béla's efforts nowadays to find out exactly what was the "religion" of Elek Vida were of no effect.

Béla was terrified! Had Elek quite lost his soul? Béla had hinted as much, one afternoon. "H'm—lost my soul just in finding it—along with my mind, *kedvesem*?" returned Elek gently, with a sort of dreamful, dreadful cheerfulness! ... No, talk had grown vain; Elek would not be brought to it, nor to book, in any way acceptable to Béla. Yet Elek led an excellent life, respected carefully many outward observances of his uncle's Church, including going to services tolerably often, so long as the good Dékan lived. What was worth considering, too, the Dékan, accounted a pillar of Catholic orthodoxy, had once said, a bit crossly, to somebody—"Let Elek alone! Elek's soul is all right—God knows it, and even I know it." Which remark seemed queer to Béla and to others.

Separated again, for this summer, Béla had meditated anew and much, on Elek's sad spiritual state. The result had been a letter to Elek, begging for at least some insight into his real beliefs, his creed, into Elek's "religion"; a letter so grave, so entreating, so

affectionate, that Elek had given way. He had replied, "When I next write you, I will answer all your questions, as well as I can." So now Elek probably had kept his word! In a worried curiosity, and hoping that the bulky missive would not mean Elek's self-committal to utter atheism, skepticism, paganism or other damnation, under his own signature, like Faust, the young seminarist of N— began to read the letter which follows:

II.

"Dear friend! Really, you trouble yourself so much for me! You say to me again, that you 'will know, must know' what is my religion, my faith—or my no-religion and my unfaith; taking them not as of merely my necessary social conduct, nor of my vague assents, but as my real convictions. I am not sure if I can fully express them to anyone; but I will try to convey them to you, as to no one else on earth. What I write to you shall be quite as one soul speaking to another, so far as is in my power. But so spoken this time, let the subject be closed for us; with silence on the matter between us forevermore. We must not argue. Trust me, Béla, *that* is not worth while. It has always been, at bottom, a waste of time for us, as for most other men; and always will be so."

"I am going to begin with telling you something of what I do not believe. It will—probably—be the longer part of my answer to you. And I beg you to be not too terrified, in reading."

" 'A religion—a divinely-revealed religion,' you

say. Béla, I do not believe that there is any 'divinely revealed religion'; nor that there has ever been such, nor ever will be such. I do not believe that God, the Uncommunicable, Unapproaching, the Ineffable, the Unknown, the Unknowable!—ever has declared Himself to man, by word or sign, or ever will so declare Himself, to teach us definitely and definitively how we shall construe and worship Him. I do not believe that God ever *can* do so. I do not believe that man ever can guess, far less know, what God is. Just *there*, indeed, seems to me the consummation of human impiety—our degradation of God as an ideal—our arrogance! I do not believe that we have achieved the basis for supernatural religion. I do not believe that mankind yet possesses any notion of what is pleasing or displeasing to God, unless in some vague coincidence. I do not believe that we can know what are real Right and real Wrong, if to be judged by divine standards of criticism. I do not believe that we should speak as we do of 'sins in the sight of God'; since man has not any way of knowing what are such sins, nor what sin is. I do not believe that we have ever come into revealed touch with the Abstract Moral, or with the Abstract Immoral."

"As to our earthly existence, why, in all this complex mystery of transmitted human life, I do not believe that we know, that we do, anything which we have, demonstrably, a right to think is linked with aught beyond this world. I do not believe that we know of any sort of future beyond the span of mortality; howbeit we set such a value on ourselves that we claim immortality of soul, as if by

a chartered right; and seek, in our hope, or despair, to enter such a future. It may be, at best, our mere dream—our poor yearning. I do not believe that we know what we are, Béla. We have never determined what are the beginnings of ourselves; how then dare we say that we know what we shall be? We came from somewhere, we are here, we go on somewhither. Perhaps, most justly, and kindly, and wisely, we do not go on; not in any appreciable, comprehensible relation with our human and individual selves, so frail, so trivial, I mean. That we are a far-away part of God, somehow—that we are atoms of the Divine and the Immortal, and to be ever such, through shifting—transforming—currents, oh, let us hope it! But no man, and not God, has ever ensured this to us, since surely no man has ever seen, or ever could see, the face of God, nor could hear His voice, nor could know God's thought nor God's will as to man, or as to anything else. Never, never! "

" So, you see comes the fact, that I cannot 'believe' in any one or another of the world's religions, Béla, as demonstrably divine of system, as revealed thing. I cannot take one creed as being truer and better than its fellow, except—important exception to us mortals—except in comparing such religion's works and ways, in one or another race, and in one or another social epoch; noting action of a spiritual system in one or another mind or temperament; racially or in individuals. ... All religions are but as parts, older or newer, of earth's intellectual and social eddys, that come and go;

each one destined to be born, to mature, to decline and to die; as does man, in man's yesterday, man's to-day, man's to-morrow. Never a religion for longer existence, never! What are centuries of our time, measured by the dial of the world?"

"Béla, believe me, faiths are good, religions are 'true' or not, only according to races and days. Religions last their few hundreds of years, or their many thousands; then we find them evaporating from the social and the spiritual atmosphere of a changing humanity. Faiths all are but of human creations. As such, they are wholesome or noxious, pure or defiling, useful or mischievous, true or false, according to their works, to their lands, and to the particular types concerned with them. Their value or its contrary, according to our standards, is to the man here, nowhere else."

"Pagan, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, Moslem, Confucianic, Greek, Catholic, Protestant, all forms that you will, the same restriction cuts at the root of all. As for their text-books—often so noble, so beautiful and inspiring, so helpful to us in this world of our thought and action, why, to me, my dear friend, from the Bible, the Shastras, the Dhammapadha and the Koran, to the Golden Book of a Smith or a Jones or a Robinson—a Robinson Crusoe, wandering in the solitudes of some new 'revelation'—all are just so many ethics of man. Never should we arrogate that they are epistles of God to us. Not one book, not one line, has any proved link with the Mind of God. Shall we—we!—know the Will of the Divine? Shall we hear it interpreting existence?—confiding to us the fact of

any life beyond this little one of ours, indeed rounded by a sleep? I cannot, I dare not believe so! To me such a willingness, such a condescension, as a possibility from God, degrades God. It alloys and disintegrates His perfect divinity. His ways are not our ways, His thoughts never can be our thoughts. Our ears do not catch His voice. Our infinitesimal impulses do not ascend to His cognizance. To you, prayer is a cause; to me, prayer is only an effect."

"So is it, then, that one religion ever has disputed and displaced another; ever will be disputed, will be displaced, as long as shall last this world of men, with beliefs more or less artificial, complex and fair, which bud forth from human existences only; exhaling from our human concepts of good or evil, inspired from our practical egoisms, our passionate yearnings for peace as to the Unknown. Sin and the sinner, the just and the unjust, vice and virtue, coming happiness, or coming misery, for the soul, our ideas of Heaven and of Hell, our dogmas of a reckoning and a continuation? Human establishments and symbols all, my dear Béla; affirmations from man to man, sincerely laid down, or not so; according to source, and environment. Many of them are of a beauty, a value, a force for beneficence in this world, not to be replaced by any others at hand. Hence we should not be too easily their noisy discreditors, their sneering enemies, their fierce reformers. Let us leave those activities to the organized sects of the past, with their wars and slaughters around the Cross, with their hangmen and edicts of exile; or to the intolerant theological disputes even of our day. In almost all of to-day's dogmas is some

ethical or social element of utility ; though one dare not find there any clear light from Beyond."

... " Yes, theories and symbols are they, all religions, be they old or new, graceful or grotesque, kindly or cruel, noble or puerile ! ... Meantime, here below are we ; ever left to ourselves, ever without any proved message. We stare out towards death, whatever death may be—groping, meditating, maddened sometimes, unanswered always !—silenced by solemn factitiousness and factions of creeds ; or, too often, with vibrationless souls, weary of all those fancies and phantoms, which have taught us nothing but incredulity."

" So, my dear Béla, for many of us who are honest, better to have no ' religions ' at all, as the world understands the word. Better to dismiss them all, frankly and calmly, if here and there with a sigh. The sky will be far clearer without them, for many of us mortals ; even in not expecting to see guiding-stars in our night-journey ; and, with sadder certainty, not daring to hope for any unveiled sun by day."

" ' For many of us ? ' There you exclaim that I am travelling an old road ; one not far from Spinozism, with the dictum that though religions may be dismissed by and for many men, dogmatic faith is still most necessary for a far larger number ; something indispensable for the guidance, the comfort of the average soul, for the unphilosophic world-mind. That sort of mind cries out for a divine basis of moral conduct, demanding dogma in social environments ; else soon it is miserable, unmanageable. I do not dispute for an instant, Béla, that one or another dogmatized religion is, we will say, a

need, political and social. Dogmatized religions probably will always be indispensably of secular service. Life hasn't yet reached a point of philosophic culture when we can depend on vague, popular concepts of God, of Christ, of Buddha, of Socrates and Moham-med, and so on, to keep our police-courts empty, and to assure us that the grocer will not give us short weight in his sugar. The population of the world still consists of men and women who are only more or less moral, *selon*; even if largely well disposed, and incidentally intellectual. Unluckily a good part of humanity is quite distinctly of criminal proclivities. To a huge contingent, it is less natural to fear God, than it is to fear the constable. To encourage spiritual fantasies, that can hold in check the evil proletariats, and to confirm our social codes, are still advisable policies. One or another religious system is absolutely necessary to such ethical action."

"So just here I will make you a further concession. ('How very kind!'—do I hear you remark? Believe me, Béla, the last thought in my mind is to be patronizing, in this talk!) My concession is this: I make at least one choice among recognized creeds, as a spiritual influence on individuals; one to be carefully considered. When a man or a woman, be it in despair, be it in hope, be it in bewilderment, says to himself or to herself that despite all logical obstacles, he or she must have a categorical "religion," needs a dogmatic system of faith and practice, requires a defined spiritual authority in the social fabric—then, in nine cases out of ten, there is, for the occidental, only a single resort. One must become a Catholic. You start back in amaze-

ment at what seems my sudden opening-out toward a vast inconsistency? But you need not start at all. Quite logically—as well as theologically—let the doubter turn to Catholicism. For there, Béla, all extremes meet. There the acute spiritual-intellectual paradox is embodied pacifically. There will you find blended negation of all, with affirmation of all, if you will but argue deep enough. There the spiritual circle is travelled-around, if you will but journey far enough. Only in that amazing, complex, prismatic, pagan-christian fabric of theorizings, that finest tissue of human concessions, that labyrinth of spiritual subtleties, of philosophic casuistries, of exquisite temporizings with Eternity—only in *that* one vast House of Faith can the faithless find rooms to dwell in, gardens to walk in, groves to sit in—albeit in silence."

"Ah, I anticipate your other exclamation, my dear friend! No, Béla, it really is not worth while to discuss acceptances in Protestantism, by the types of souls and hearts in my mind, on whom I enjoin Catholicism as a refuge. For but one detractive: no phase of Protestantism has ever possessed, in the degree of Rome, intellectual dignity along with sufficient adaptiveness to all humanity's impulses; a due coherence of dogmatic structure with elasticity in practice; as awful prestige, a practical authority of action over the masses, the quality of profiting by our mortal terrors, of fluidizing man's ignorances and weaknesses, of absorbing all, all—for the benefit of higher strata of mentality and of psychic ability! No church has achieved this, save Rome."

"So, Béla, if one must have a walking-stick to

support him (but *must* one ?) let him, by all means, buy the most used, and seemingly strongest and smartest, sold in the markets. If we feel that we must assist at a solemn spectacle, surely we do wisely to select the stateliest of theatres, with the most expressive sorts of scenery, the richest costumes, the most dignified of dramas, the most sonorous diction, the most accomplished actors, the most aristocratic patronage. But, as I have implied, one reserve is wise, be careful not to criticize, to depreciate, the piece too loudly to your neighbour, especially if he happens to be a stock-holder in the company."

"What I say of Rome is comparative, please remember, my dear friend. By it I am not disparaging, save quite relatively, your faith, nor any other. I have all possible respect, admiration, for one or another high and consistent phase of Protestantism. But its want of visible, organic, nay, tyrannic authority to-day removes its gentler control from the class of minds that I have mentioned above. And indeed in the word "high" comes to one's thought a lack. For, Protestantism never has understood how to be the religion for really widest humanity, though its spiritual systems ever have claimed so. That cannot be. Its atmosphere is too rarefied; too much is left to the individual. Again, Protestantism, sect by sect of it, has finished its best work, as a distinctive theological product. Like the work of other faiths—glorious, invaluable, in so much to man's life—that climax is over. Protestantism as to theology dissolves before our eyes; as a spiritual system it fades away, generation by generation. A long future for it cannot be, for now it has hardly a coherent present. Rome's

fabric? Oh, that too is passing its way; but with far less obvious crumbling; indeed with some centuries of influence and of utility yet to be traversed by it, in a proud yet condescending inclusiveness."

"Catholicism against Protestantism, one sect against another, in the circuit of Christian systems, I cannot believe that they are abstractly of God. And so, with a solemn silence, one turns from even the most appealing, or most awful, of their aspects; humbly believing, with Elihu, that—'Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; He regardeth not any that are wise of heart?' Or, in the phrase of a recent commentator on religions of to-day, we feel that—'Christianity must take its place among the other ethical and spiritual forces which have arisen in the bosom of humanity by purely natural means.'"

III.

"But all this time, impatient and—I fear—more and more saddened in heart, by my long confession of negations (remember, I warned you that they would be the most part of my letter) you are waiting for me to tell you what I believe; to state 'my religion,' so to call it."

"My dear Béla, I lay down my pen—I muse, I hesitate—not a troublous hesitancy, however—I try to formulate and to summarize."

"It seems to me that I find in my heart and soul only what, in widest meaning, is a 'religion' fixed in your heart and soul also; the single one really rooted and bearing fruit in the hearts of

thousands of other men the world around ; no matter what their races, their dogmatic confessions or educations. It is a faith above church, above temple ; of no theologians, of no saints, of no revelations ; not lurid with Hells, not braved out with the shimmerings and trumpetings of any Heaven. I believe that we are here in this life for some wholly good reason ; howbeit a reason unknown. I believe that all ignorances that here surround us are for equally good and kindly causes. I believe that we must not value our condition of humanity too high, while never despising ourselves, nor any one else. I believe that we have no right to be afraid of life ; no right to be afraid of death. The world may need, or may not need, more confidence in life ; but the world well may be taught more confidence in death. I believe that man's faith in what is tangibly about him should suffice to guide him along here, day by day, leading him to love his neighbour, to do neighbour good ; to help, not to hinder, humanity, as he sees it about him ; to brighten and to tranquilize the world. I think that, as men and women, we must act " for the work's sake," and because we are *here*, whether what we are, or can do here, shall count for us in an Elsewhere, or not. Above all, we must do good, since we find Good. We must live uprightly without need of any humiliating dogmas of being our best selves here, of doing our best here, because hoping reward, or dreading penalty, in any Beyond."

" I believe, too, that some new " religion " for widest humanity, not just for you or for me, is in the air—is growing up in men's spirits, more and more potently—the next great spiritual dispensation to the

world. All old faiths are passing away before it. Let us not be afraid in seeing them pass. We cannot yet guess what it will be, this next wide expression of the spiritual mind in man, which he is to work out, through events and influences now unclear. You and I will not live to see it—this new world-religion. But it will take substance in the lapse of centuries; all our present creeds and faiths transmuted into it, or vanished uneloquently before it."

"Indeed, as to that outlook—while I do not expect for an instant your assent to such a parallel—the relation to-day on the part of intellectual Christendom, toward Christianity as a spiritual system, seems to me almost identical with the attitude of Greek and Roman peoples toward their Olympian deities and cults, during the later centuries of hellenic-latin paganism. The old temples were still solemnly frequented, the rites were not abandoned, the gods were either spoken of respectfully in public, by millions of well-bred, easy-going folk (no matter what was the tone of open skepticism and satire) or else not spoken of at all. Offerings flowed into temple-treasuries. The old institution seemed yet firm. Besides, what was there better, which yet had general and authoritative hold? But under all such aspects, and without arguments and edicts, the real world-mind had ceased to believe in paganism. Its priests knew, in silence, that it was fable, cunningly or clumsily devised. The lay-intellect was dismissing it, as a fabric faded, outworn, ravelled. Everywhere was the intuition that the soul of such a system had fumed forth; while, at the same time, that something unclear to the many, something finer and true to the

contemporary world-psychos was in evolution—a new spiritual perspective soon to be clarified; that a new edifice of faith was noiselessly arising... So to me, Béla, are the masses of men and women, of superior intelligence, feeling and acting in their churches and creeds to-day. Something new is coming, whatsoever it shall be!"

"I like to believe that God is in man, even if unanalyzably, and so minutely of such relationship that one sighs, and says that it is more fancy than possibility. And therewith—just there, I might say—in all that is in me of uncertainty, of negation, I see no cause to be disquieted, I find no reason to accuse life. I believe that we never should be timid of the Unknown—as I have said. No, let us face it serenely; and when the time comes to go out into it, let us go cheerfully and tranquilly, supposing that all before us is Good."

"My dear Béla, I don't know that I can say that I "believe" more than that. Do you find it enough? I expect that you, and many others, never could find it so. But listen—listen I——not to me, Béla, but to your inmost being! Do you really hear any Voice to tell you that man can come nearer to the secret of things?—can build a religion on aught else? Likely you exclaim at once, "Yes, yes—much nearer!—and a religion far higher!" Well, happy man you, if you *know* that, if you believe it! I cannot; hence I have set down for you disbeliefs. And so, Béla—taking just me as myself, what is your verdict? Have I too little religion? Or have I, in paradox, too much?"


"As I came home through the forest, the other

evening, I found my thoughts running into a rough verse, which I will give you here, as the end of my letter; not a little as summary of my "religion," dear friend. We might call it "A Valediction":

' Life has been well, now death shall be well!
Of my going I have no care,
Though Whence I have come I never have known,
Nor my Whither—nor Anywhere;
I am one with the tree, with the bird, with the star—
With the rock, with the fire, with the flood—
What shall happen me, here or Alar?
Nothing save God and Good! "

IV.

Béla laid down the letter. A little emerald-hued lizard, startled by the movement, darted aside from the paper; but concluding that there was nothing whatever to be agitated about, the lizard remained tranquil, almost at Béla's foot; watching, with its merry, wise eyes, the perplexed expression on the young theological student's handsome face. Béla rested his forehead wearily on his hand. Yes, there the question remained, after all!... Had Elek too little religion, or too much, or—maybe—well, just enough? Béla sighed. But presently, somehow or other, he began smiling a little, if only a little. The small lizard saw that there were tears in Béla's eyes. But though Béla's brow did not quite clear, the smile remained. And the tiny lizard, looking knowingly up at Béla, and at the sky, was extremely glad of that smile.



(TO MISS ALICE R. DAVIDSON)

SUNRISE-WATER

I.

As you come down from Bar Harbor, the boat stops at Castro. The village, a trifle isolated, seems the more charming among Maine's coast-towns because of such isolation. Castro stretches along a high hillside, with the clear delicacy of an aquarelle, in tones of green, white and blue. Even the sky is outshone by the richness of colour in a Penobscot Bay inlet that once must have made Castro's territory an island—not what it is to-day, a peninsula joined to the mainland, by an apologetic strip of marshy soil. Perhaps, however, there may have been geologic foresight in this. For, Castro's people even now do not wish for wider connexion with the rest of creation—that is to say, its older generation still shows no anxiety whatever to be in closer touch with the great and wicked world, so close at hand. Established with an antiquity and a history that could put many an old American town to the blush, independent and conservative, even now Castro recognizes the Bar Harbor boat as a superfluity—not to say a society-evil. Is not the boat an intruder on the office of the old daily "stage," to and from the outer social Chaos? Is it not an example of the foolish haste of travel, in which irresponsible, cityfied,

rival folk delight?—a facility giving them the privileges of invading respectable and distant communities? When in utter unexpectedness, years ago, arose, for the first time, the question of a railway—nothing less—to connect Castro and Holdfast, that lies on the other side of the Bay, one single town-meeting sufficed dexterously to shatter such a scheme to fragments so small that the impertinent Holdfasters have not yet succeeded in collecting the pieces, for a fresh discussion. Save for the small rope-walk, which hums soothingly in the long summer afternoons, Castro has not now one manufactory. It banks its money in Holdfast, or in Boston. It has not an untidy dwelling, an unsightly nook, an uncivil person, a pauper, or an impetuous native, within its limits. It speaks, without too much awe, of the three or four citizens whose fortunes, large by inheritance, have slowly progressed millionward. Of New York, it seldom speaks at all. Boston it recognizes, socially and commercially, because Boston has learned how to be exigent with Castro; a kind of remote Gessler to the village.

It will be understood that Castro would prefer to select what it calls its "summer people," since it cannot forbid such access to the place, nor prevent their entertainment in two or three boarding-houses, and in as many tentative hotels. But such a selection is not feasible. Moreover, a town-hall lately having been built, it happens that the Bar Harbor steamer brings now and then, during the summer, not only really genteel, paying, and idle boarders, but such wholly undesirable and bohemian strangers as the one-horse—or no horse at all—circus, the fourth-rate concert-

party, or nigger-minstrel show, the unkempt illusionist, and even the wandering theatrical company—all usually with bags rather than baggage.

So it fell that on a certain soft, clear evening in August, many seasons ago, there appeared in Castro such a band of declassed thespians. They came to fill an engagement 'for one night only'; as was posted about the village, with colourful exaggeration. Osgood's Tavern, rather than a newer house, had become the stopping-place of such guests, 'on tour,' with all a tour's hardships and hopes, between "the States" and the Provinces. At Osgood's Tavern accordingly, did "The Original Criterion Company, Carrying its Own Scenery, Effects and Music, and Offering Unexceptionable Talent: Reserved Seats Thirty-five Cents," take up its quarters. Fed and refreshed, at eight o'clock the Original Criterion Company was ready to enter upon its histrionic duties in Mueller's Hall, over the pine doors whereof two large oil-lamps flared in vigorous invitation.

That Mueller's Hall had been made available for drama at all, naturally did not at first commend itself to any of the Castro community—except to fisher-people from the wharf-quarter, or to smaller tradesmen and inconsequent summer-boarders. August Mueller, a thrifty German newcomer, had been remonstrated with, because he had insisted on adding to his stage some gaudy scenery, a gaudier curtain and thirty kerosene footlights. But, little by little, had spread in Castro a vague demoralization, encouraged by many hotel-guests; by other people who ought to have known better. One night, not long after Mueller had 'improved' his

hall into a theater, who should patronize "Uncle Tom's Cabin" but Wilson Mailer, Mrs. Mailer and four of the Breens—the Breens and the Mailers being Castroans whose great-grandfathers, from stately houses still occupied by "the families," had watched the maneuvers of hostile British fleets. It was all well enough for the Mailers to say that they had merely yielded to a frolic of Clara Mailer's insistence! But lo, another night, when "Professor Antonio" was exhibiting his sleight of hand, it was from Dr. Delano's dignified white hat that a top-eared, black rabbit was lifted; and Dr. Delano was a selectman and an elder in the church—the degenerate descendant of Colonel Delano who had led the repulse of the Hessians before Fort George, on Academy Hill. What wonder if, with such careless examples, Castro soon lost its social bearings, and furnished every now and then an audience in Mueller's Hall much more 'representative' than anything in its shows deserved to be.

Such its case was on this particular evening, graced by the Original Criterion Company's art. The Criterion Company did not realize how much it was flattered in that besides Castro's *tiers état*, besides the young ladies in yachting-caps, and their cavaliers in tennis-flannels, also besides the vaguer part of the audience, an uncommon number of Castro's native and substantial society was distributed about the hall; with nothing better to do than to see what sort of a performance the play-acting people would make out, this time. And so, presently, came a dubious polka from a cabinet-organ, two fiddles and a cornet after which the curtain rose on "Helen the Forsaken or the Mill-Owner's Bride."

It was a distinctly bad performance of a bad melodrama that the Original Criterion Company afforded Castro that night. The leading-lady was a buxom, youngish person, much over-rouged, needlessly black as to eyebrows, and shrill of voice. The leading-man was an insufferable flux of incompetence and rant. The honest farmer of the piece was mildly intoxicated. The comic doctor was a tiresome buffoon. The dialogue was spouted with provoking mechanicality or ignorance. One grew weary of tracing out the same actors under new disguises; for, the cast being long, its characters necessitated a good deal of doubling-up—even the musicians had to hurry incontinently, to and from their vague demesne, to assist the action on the stage. The costumes and properties were less artistic than Mueller's ill-made and worse-abused scenery. All was effort without capability or training—the ambulant hedge-theater, with its grotesqueness and latent pathos, but with little else.

Nevertheless, "Helen the Forsaken" seemed to entertain, in one way or another, the mixed audience before its "Vivid Pictures of Real Life." The young collegians from Cambridge violently applauded everything. But for the presence of Miss Tracey and Miss Bonfort, from the Arcadian Hotel, they would have geyed everything openly. The pretty cousins, Boston girls, kept the lads in order; and privately agreed that they would never, *never* let Joe and Ned bring them again to an entertainment so unlike art at 'the Tremont.' But a play is a play; Miss Bonfort was grave during Helen's elopement, and Miss Tracey's color rose in proportion

to the villain's arguments. Squire Niven and Gertrude Niven thought it all pretty poor acting ; but Gertrude and the Squire did not leave at the entr'acte. As for the village-contingent, it enjoyed everything, solidly and stolidly, and would not have been carried into romance half so potently by a performance worthy of the *Comédie Française* or the *Hofburg*.

But, before the first act was ended, one person in the hall had fully decided that the bill did not offer a dramatic exhibition to her taste, nor even one which she quite cared to countenance to its end. Castro women have had some reputation for knowing their own minds, on subjects of greater purport. Lucia Prior knew her mind intimately, at all times. The lady was here by accident—in some measure ; for Lucia Prior seldom set her foot toward Mueller's Hall, except for the annual concert of the Orthodox Church, or for the Hospital Bazaar. The old Prior place, surrounded by pine trees, and painted a dull yellow, stood almost at the top of Castro's hill, next to the Cemetery's white-dotted expanse. It faced acres of sunny land, sloping down toward the harbour ; land handed down through five generations to Miss Lucia—the last of the Prior succession. Miss Lucia was far from puritanic notions as to amusements. Her quiet life had been broad. But she was not without art-standards. Satisfied that the Original Criterion was a coarse business, Miss Prior was asking herself whether any ancestors of hers had ever wasted time with so bad an excuse as had she for wasting it at that minute. On the whole, she fancied ' no.' The last scenes of the first act were cruder than earlier ones. Sitting her straightest,

Miss Lucia fidgetted in her uncomfortable chair, in the first row. Her personality at all times had a fine dignity now quite drolly out of place. As she sat there, with Hannah Persis Parkes, her worthy 'help,' insulating one side, some dubious strangers on the other, her dark eyes showing deeper and deeper disapproval, a frown on her forehead, her black fan moving with swifter annoyance, Miss Prior showed that she felt herself out of place, and meant soon to be out of the place that made her feel so.

Her disaffection, however, was not screwed quite to the sticking-place before the second act of "Helen the Forsaken" began. Miss Lucia had just determined on retreat, and the writing at home of several letters. Hannah Parkes could stay, if she chose. Miss Lucia's wrath, too, was centering on old Dr. Delano, seated some rows of seats beyond her—Dr. Delano was only somewhat past fifty but the term 'old' had come with his son's majority—inasmuch as his sense of fun had brought Miss Prior to Mueller's Hall. For, had not the Doctor met Miss Prior in the post-office, that morning, as she stood surveying the Original Criterion's bills? And had he not coolly remarked, "Said to be a very good performance, Lucia. You'd better go, and take Hannah Persis. Three good Boston stars, I understand." And these were the stars! One of them—the comic gentleman—at this moment delivered himself of a witticism quite too metropolitan for Castro's approval. Miss Prior gathered her skirts for withdrawal. She was about to whisper to Hannah Persis Parkes, when her attention was caught and soon absorbed

by something, only in externals a part of the programme; a factor likely to appeal to Miss Luciani alone.

That matter was the appearance of a new personage in "Helen the Forsaken." Such personage was the wife, neglected and otherwise wronged, of the iniquitous mill-owner—the customary *délaissée*, who traces the evil-doer from city to city, for the opportune foiling of his seductive rascalities. Out of the inevitable inn she stepped, with the inevitable—"Woman, how dare you allow that man to embrace you! He is married! He—is—my—husband!"

It need not have taken long discrimination to remark that there was a difference between the rest of the Original Criterion's company, and the actress named in the bill "Laura Legrand." The difference was written all over her, personally and professionally. It was not that "Laura Legrand" was a much better actress. She was indeed hardly any artist at all—at least, in the Original Criterion's sense of the word. But her dramatic shortcomings were not from entire inexperience. Their source marked a more personal difference. Her appearance, her manners, her accent, were alike those of a lady; not merely a stage-lady. Taller than the average woman, "Laura Legrand" possessed a figure with lines yet lovely beneath her dingy satin gown. Her face, luminous by a pair of blue eyes—shadowed by such deep circles that cosmetics could not hide them—had a ruined beauty, with features still delicately harmonious. Her feet and hands were small—the latter ineffective in stereotyped gestures that were

part of a general frailty of physique and of movement. Once she coughed, painfully, in the middle of the strident leading-lady's best sentence of the scene, thereby receiving an angry bye-word. She suggested some clever but invalid amateur, well-coached for undertaking, in a drawing-room, a pastime that a wise physician had forbidden. She walked well, but with visible effort. Her voice was sweet and light, too light for even Mueller's Hall; and she spoke her conventional lines with feeling and elocution. Her rival was decked with store of stage-jewellery; Laura Legrand wore none—unless what looked like a real wedding-ring was a sham as to both metal and meaning. These and other traits hinted at a fallen star—not lapsed merely from the upper realms of a capricious profession, but having dropped from an atmosphere clearer than that of any theater.

This was not all. Something far stronger than just curiosity or sympathy had fastened Lucia Prior's attention on this poor wanderer, whose counterpart in bohemia never lacks. From the first instant that "Laura Legrand" had walked out of that gaudy canvas retreat—had moved about the stage—had spoken—had soliloquized to her audience—the Castro householder demanded of herself where before now she had faced the original Criterion's "second lady." When? Where? Miss Prior had been to theaters dozens of times in her life, including evenings at playhouses of New York authority; many others during winter-visits to Boston. But the association that now stirred her—even to setting her fairly to ransacking memory—could it be only of the stage? Hardly. The problem seemed to touch on a more real

existence. Ah, that way of holding up the head! And that little nervous movement in turning! That sarcastic note in the voice! That mocking smile! They all shook Miss Prior's nerves, as being not at all new to her. Surprise became annoyance, annoyance almost pain. Farther and farther, Miss Lucia's remembrance glided back in perplexity, ever asking—"Who is it that that woman is so much like?"

The curtain fell on the second act. Miss Prior did not quit Mueller's Hall. She nodded absent-mindedly, instead of in reproof, at Dr. Delano. She turned her play-bill over and over, thoughtfully, heedless of Hannah Parkes's favourable criticisms of the drama; marking still less the squeaking and grunting of the Criterion's Own Orchestra.

The third act of "Helen the Forsaken" abruptly brought "Laura Legrand" forward again, in a dress if anything more shabby than her earlier one; and with an increase of her cough. And now Miss Prior discerned that the object of her perplexed notice was returning her interest. Yes—the actress was watching the Castro lady, almost in the same measure as was the Castro lady watching the actress. At first, Miss Prior fancied that the attention was merely professional; that "Laura Legrand" was so flattering as to do what the stage calls "play at" a near and intelligent spectator. Miss Lucia soon rejected that idea. "Laura Legrand" was giving her a strangely psychological attention; glances of a pitiful, furtive, personal sort, as if a recognition haunted the actress, in turn—untimely and disturbingly. Soon whenever the two pairs of eyes fairly met, there came a shock to Miss Prior's heart, catching at something

almost like a passionate inquiry, an irresistible appeal. Once "Laura Legrand" forgot her lines—recovered them hurriedly. A few moments later, it fell to her to exclaim, "Sir, our faces may change; but who would mind that, if our hearts did not change!" And there-with, as she entered into a long denunciation of the insolent mill-owner's daughter, two things happened.

Miss Prior's mind had traveled far back, by this time. It had retrogressed to her winters at a boarding-school, in Portland. There the shy Lucia Prior, ever studious and reserved — she who regularly took home her prizes for algebra and history, and so on, to her grandfather's parlour-table, in Castro—there she had wondered, many a time, why life and study seemed so much lighter responsibilities than she could find them, to a handful of careless, giggling girls, for the most part younger than herself. They had been loyal subjects to one or two equally careless and giggling leaders. And of the leaders, a certain Maryland miss, named Isabel May Duroc, had lacked neither beauty nor the art of dominating by an incorrigibly frivolous, sometimes scornful, supremacy; albeit a girl earlier in her teens than were most of her clique.

"My goodness!" exclaimed Miss Prior to herself, in a slow conviction coming home at last, "That's—no, it isn't—yes, as true as I sit here, I believe that's Belle May Duroc! Yes—that's who it is! Belle May Duroc! My gracious me!"

Exactly as that certitude broke upon her, occurred the second important incident not in the bill. "Laura Legrand" coughed, with a spasm that shook her frame. The artificial roses in her cheeks became burning

spots, against a deathly white. With the protest to the vicious mill-owner, in words all too appropriate. "Go!—I can say nothing more to you—nothing! I am—ill—very, very ill!" she fell upon a red garden-settle, and fainted away. The curtain descended. The audience applauded stormily, unsuspecting of a *réplica* some instants premature, unobservant of a real tragedy. The leading gentleman and the female star came forth, for plaudits; the orchestra aroused itself to new fury. But Miss Prior, at least, had observed that "Laura Legrand" had been overtaken by more than a stage-swoon—by a hemorrhage.

To control her excitement, even in conclusions that she felt sure were correct, was a second nature to Miss Prior. But she felt that here quick action was urgent. She beckoned Dr. Delano.

"John, that woman there—the one that did the fainting-business—she is dying! She needs a doctor—at once."

"Nonsense, Lucia! It's all in the play. Do you like it?"

"I'm not thinking of the play. You just slip right around to the stage. You'll find I'm right. It's lucky that nobody but myself appears to have better eyes than yours! There'd be a stir. Don't let anybody notice your going, but don't wait. She has a bad hemorrhage, I tell you. I know it."

"God bless me! Are you sure of it, Lucia?" They always called one another by their Christian names—Dr. Delano was not much her senior. "If you really think anything like that's happened, I go directly."

"Please." The Doctor glided from her side.

and taking advantage of the bustle of the satisfied audience, quitted Mueller's Hall, without question. Miss Prior stared at the curtain, absorbed in troubled surprise.

Isabel May Duroc! Could it be possible? Not in long years of thoughts of many people, had Isabel Duroc invaded memory! Yet now, now, how definitely recurred the face and figure of the pretty, spoiled, unstudious Marylander!—her vanities and spites, her gay ridicule of all young women who went to an institution of learning to learn anything, her laughing contempt for an outlook on life that respected life's realities, her escapades—audacities. An item in the "society" column of a newspaper, only a year or so after Lucia Prior's graduation, had mentioned Belle Duroc's marriage; hinting moreover at one of characteristic sort—a runaway-match. But what chances and changes, in the courses of folly or accident, what unhappy reverses, what Nemesis chastising a young girl's blithe levity, had made that mischievous and rich fellow-scholar, at Miss Refnell's Institute, sink to the level of a jaded and faded *cabotine*?—collapsing before Lucia Prior, on the boards of an out-of-the-way Maine village, as member of a band of stage-nomads?

But along with such a shock and retrospect, so wholly unlooked for, with swifter practicality in Miss Prior's agitation blended the query—had Isabel Duroc really recognized her? Did Isabel need her? That, most probably, was the case—the woman wished her!.... Should she have gone to Isabel, with Dr. Delano?... Should she go to her now?... Harassed by these anxieties, it is not strange that Miss Prior

surprised Hannah Persis by brief and senseless responses to remarks on "Helen the Forsaken."

Meantime a guess that something was amiss fluttered about the hall. The delay lengthened. The orchestra had ceased playing—had vanished. Dr. Delano did not return. Presently the leading gentleman appeared, in his even more essential character of stage-manager. There came a hush. 'The kind indulgence of the audience was asked for the finishing of the piece without Miss Legrand's participation; as the lady was ill and could not continue her part. Fortunately she would have had little more to do.' There was the applause of consent. Another delay, then the curtain rose. As it did so, from outside of the window, near to Miss Lucia's chair, came Dr. Delano's voice, quick—cautious. He was standing, tiptoe, on the grass, his lips to the half-closed blind. The interposed strangers were momentarily absent.

"Lucia! Lucia!"

She had only to turn her head, and to lean warily.

"Come out—you and Hannah—to the street. I'll meet you. Be quiet about it."

Miss Prior rose, and passed gravely down the aisle, into the modest vestibule; followed in obedience by surprised Hannah Parkes.

"Was you sick, Miss Lucia?" Hannah asked anxiously. "Or don't you think it's a nice play?"

"No, I'm not sick. But—but we may have to see somebody who is sick. Dr. Delano called me—from the window—the one in Mueller's garden."

Beyond the knot of stragglers in the circle of light from the porch, Dr. Delano waited. He guided the two at once into the darkness of the street.

"You were right," he began quickly. "I've had her taken over to Osgood's. There isn't room to swing a cat, behind old Mueller's stage."

"A very sick woman isn't she?" They turned toward the tavern, Hannah in the rear.

"Yes—but she won't be so long. Fact is, she's dying—just as you thought. Poor thing! Lucia, who on earth is she? She says that she knows you! You! That's why I want you there. Who is she? Who was she?"

"That's my business, John—for the present. I'll go so far as to say that I used to go to school with her. That's enough for you, or for anybody else just now."

"Ah," observed the Doctor dryly. "Conservative as ever, Lucia."

"If 'conservative' means minding my own business, yes. Who's with her, John?"

"Mrs. Osgood. Sarah Osgood's on hand, too. The business-man of the show helped get her over."

"It's really—so dangerous?"

"She's comfortable, but it won't be more than a few hours for her—if that. Seems to be the end of a long lane with her."

"Did she call me by name, John?"

"She did. Poor thing! Just as we were getting her out of the place, she pulled my head down—gasped out that she'd 'seen an old friend, Lucia Prior, in front—would I fetch you?' Then came another bad turn—of course. Her child—"

"Oh, dear me! There's a child belonging to her, is there? How old? A boy—or a girl?"

"I don't know. It was asleep, over in Osgood's."

"Has she got a husband in the company?"

"No. The business-agent says that her husband's dead. But he didn't seem to know her real name, married or single. I've an idea that she's about as much left to herself in the world as any woman would care to be. Even you."

"If you'll kindly keep your wit till a more cheerful occasion?" Miss Prior returned sharply. "I'd rather die alone anywhere, than be obliged to live on, bored to death by my company! And now, see here—don't you let a soul in Castro, or out of it, know that I came over here with you—that is, by any wish from that poor creature! Did anybody else hear what she said to you?"

"No—I guess not."

"So much the better. I don't care to be answering strings of questions, all around the village, from Tom and Dick and Harry—not to speak of Mrs. Tom and Mrs. Dick and Mrs. Harry. So we'll try to keep this affair to ourselves, as far as we can—I suppose it won't be very far. Do you understand, John?"

"All right—all right!" he replied. They were at the threshold of the tavern's quiet, half-lighted entry. "She's in Mrs. Osgood's back-chamber. Let Hannah wait here."

With her skirts guarded against rustling, Miss Prior followed Dr. Delano along the narrow hall to its last door, before which fat Mrs. Osgood stood with a look of anxious expectancy toward the approaching couple.

"Sh—sh—!" she whispered. "She's quiet again. I was dreadful afraid she'd have another hemorrhage before you came. But she hasn't."

II.

As her eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness,, Lucia Prior saw the sick woman stretched on the couch that had served to carry her from the theater. Dr. Delano had sanctioned no more disturbance for her than that. Such a portage had been made with infinite precautions. She was but partly undressed. Sarah Osgood sat near. On her lap, Sarah held a little girl—the child of whom the Doctor had spoken; a small creature, of perhaps four years, very white in her nightgown, staring in unchildish composure at the mother. The latter's face was now so colourless that Miss Prior distinguished it from the pillow, chiefly by the brilliancy of eyes which flashed out an instant, unmistakable recognition. A vague thrill of relief, too, one might have said, crossed "Laura Legrand's" features. Miss Prior's heart throbbed, before an identity painfully surprising her. It *was* Isabel Duroc! Here she was, drifted to Castro—whence?—how?—to meet death there, in Osgood's Tavern! But not to die before this strange meeting, an event perhaps not less of eternal destiny.

The inn-keeper's wife and daughter, with the little girl, drew aside, at a sign from Dr. Delano. He occupied them and himself with some whispered words. Miss Prior took a low chair beside the couch. She bent to its occupant. Gently she enclosed in her own fingers, somewhat trembling but warm, a hand too weak to lift itself.

"Why, Belle, it's you—isn't it? Only to think of our meeting each other again! After so many years!" Miss Prior spoke with an unwonted softness

in her cold, clear voice. She did not quite know what to say. "I've been sitting over there, just wondering, wondering, all the evening who it was that I thought I recognized—and now I find it's you."

The actress's answer was scarcely audible. "Yes, Lucia. It's me—I—I knew you—in a minute. You've not changed—not as much as I have."

Dr. Delano turned about softly. "You mustn't try to talk a word more than's really necessary, Miss Legrand," he said with gentle firmness. "It's the worst thing, you know. Be careful about that, Lucia."

But a sudden energy came into Isabel Duroc's look and voice.

"Tell him—that—that I *must* talk to you," she said. "That's why I wanted you." Looking up at the Doctor, and stifling a spasm of coughing that threatened to choke utterance, bringing worse unkindness to her than that, she gasped, "Doctor—this is the end—for me—isn't it?"

"You will surely make it such, madam, unless you are perfectly quiet," he answered.

Again rebellion came into her look and accent.

"Lucia," she murmured.

"Yes."

"I mean what I say—I *must* talk to you, if—if it's—the end. I'm sure it is—so I must talk. For the child's sake. Oh dear! To think—I've met you. Such good luck—good luck! Oh, Lucia, I was so afraid."

"Yes, Belle, the best of good luck. We were always good friends, you know." Circumstances and years could not make them seem other than

schoolmates still; even if they had not always been kindly intimates at Miss Refnell's.

" Lucia—make the doctor understand it! Make him—make all of them—go away! I want you—only. I'll be careful. I've got things to tell you that nobody else must know. Tell them to them go away—to take Leila away. She mustn't be frightened."

Her eyes closed. Already she was exhausted. But when they opened, her wish was more imperious. " Why—don't you do as I say? " she demanded.

After all, what use to combat, in this final hour of earthly volition? Hardly a physician's prudence should dictate now. Into Lucia Prior's mind came, not so much curiosity, as a sense of responsibility in some kind of shrift to be made; her receiving, from these chilly lips some sort of a confession, story, command—the last words and wishes that this woman, a mother, one who had travelled far indeed from that girlhood's parting of the ways in Portland, must needs breathe into the ear of another woman. ... In a moment the two were alone, the door closed.

Isabel Daroc was silent for an instant. Then raising her forlorn eyes once more, she smiled. In the smile was a pitiful trace of old-time vivacity.

" It's odd—Lou, isn't it odd!—that we've come together this way. But then I've had my share of odds and ends all along. I'm glad, glad of this one."

" I expect you've forgotten that I went from here to Miss Refnell's," responded Miss Prior. " Or didn't you know that I boarded at my Uncle Kent's, when I went to school?—that is to say, all except my last year. I heard you were married, Belle."

" Yes—I was married—early." A bitterness,

that her weakness of utterance did not conceal, came into her words. "But Leila—that's my little girl—Leila isn't *his* child, thank God! I don't know that I'd have cared so for her, if she were."

"Did he die? Stop—I forgot. You mustn't talk to me a bit more than you can help. Just open and shut your eyes for 'yes' and 'no,' Belle. Maybe I can manage with questions—to save your getting tired out, by whatever you care to say to me. You're very weak, Belle. You know that."

"Yes. I know it. I'm going to die—in an hour or so, I guess. I heard them say so. I've had bad hemorrhages for two years. I thought I was getting over them. I *was* better. They came back last month. It's been hard to keep up. Closer, please."

She was spared the paroxysm of coughing that Miss Prior dreaded. She went on, the words fairly in her listener's ear. "I left him—Stormonth—years ago. I ran away—I had to. He was a beast."

"What did you say his name was? I'd forgotten it," asked Miss Prior reluctantly. "Stormonth? Yes. But his first name?"

"Arthur—Captain Arthur Stormonth. He was English—in the Service. I met him in Canada. We went to London to live."

"Yes. I remember. I had an idea your people didn't fancy the match. I read something—"

"Yes—it was a runaway. So it meant another one—before I got through with him."

"But shouldn't I telegraph to his folks and to yours, Belle — to-night? I think it's only right. You can send a message from here to any place."

"No, I can't. They're dead—all dead. Yes,

every creature I ever belonged to, too."

"All? Why, child! Your own father, your step-mother—wasn't she? Oh, I forgot—you'd lost them both, before you came to school? Dear, dear! But surely there's somebody—"

"No, there's nobody. Nobody in the world!" Isabel Duroc interrupted her with a vivid impatience in her whisper. "If there was anybody, do you think I'd bother you? I'd live till they could come for her—I would. But there's not a soul. I wrote to somebody—a woman—awhile ago. But she's dead, I'm sure. So it didn't matter. She was only a servant I once had. So—will you take her, Lucia?"

"Take whom?"

"Her—Leila. My child. My little girl. You saw her. I'm going to die—maybe sooner than the bit of time your doctor's given me. There's not another human being in the world I'd ever like to ask to take care of Leila, as I would you. And it's queer!—here you are! Oh Lord! You will, Lucia?"

Miss Prior's agitation had been increasing, in spite of her self-possession. The suddenness of such a request hardly lessened it.

"Me? I?—Isabel?"

The mother looked at her with an unspeakable intensity of assent and prayer.

"Why, Belle—I—I don't know. I can't tell what to say—whether I ought to do so. Surely if you must—go, so suddenly, there's somebody—a relative—with a real claim. Some place—"

"Yes, there's the almshouse. Or a big city-asylum—Portland—Augusta—I I can't let her go

there. Don't let them send her, Lucia—don't! I was always afraid of such places. Don't you remember how they whipped that child in Portland—the fireman's boy? Lucia, listen. It's nice of you to say we were good friends. But you know I wasn't a very kind girl to you in school. I know I wasn't. I used to tease you. Fanny Pyatt and I—"

"Don't talk of that, Isabel, don't! And you're tiring yourself, too, dreadfully."

"—I used to poke fun at you—and at all that older set—you and Carrie Pudney and Kitty Strong. And it was I that put that poem in the paper, about you and Ann White studying the art of catching beaux—and failing at an examination on it. But I mean didn't to be horrid to you. Forgive me."

Miss Prior was in distress, more sincerely than ever. The pathos of this recital of school-day mischief, this appeal for forgiveness for trivialities that had wholly forsaken her memory, made her eyes fill. With her other palm, she covered the hand she still held.

"Isabel, dear, don't ever think of such nonsense! Do you suppose I could! It's all past long ago."

"You forgive me Lucia?"

"I'd never anything to forgive! But, dear Belle, as to taking charge of your little girl—if you don't get better—your Leila as you call her. I—I don't quite know what to say."

"Then say only one thing, for the love of God!—that you'll take her! Oh, I can die happy then! You'll do it, Lucia? I know it's asking much—but—still—oh, do take her! You're a good woman. She'll grow up a good girl. She's a good little child now.

She knows her prayers. I've made her learn them. I don't want her ever to go back to—to Montreal. I don't want her to go away with these stage-people. I don't want her to grow up in an orphanage, or to be a stage-child. Promise me!"

"Is her father dead, Isabel? Who was he? Did you say she's not Captain Stormonth's child?"

"I—I'll tell you all about it—all—just as soon as I can. As for—her father—he'll never trouble you or her, Lucia. He's dead. She hasn't a relative on his side nor on mine—I know. Everyone's died—long ago, too. She'll be yours, Lucia, without a word from a living being to bother either of you."

"But that woman, Belle? The one you wrote to, you know?"

"Oh that's all nothing—nothing, Lucia. I can't bear to think of it now. She was only a servant, I tell you. I could think of nobody else—and there was—well, a reason, besides. But she must be dead. I never got a word from her."

Miss Prior was thinking quickly, confusedly but intently. Before she could ask another question, the dying woman spoke again.

"It's just as if it was always meant to be. Perhaps it was. You mustn't refuse. And—and—when you're bringing her up, Lucia, don't say much to her about me. It's good that you don't know a great deal. I'll just be your old schoolmate—that went on the stage—and died here. Let her think well of her mother. The best way—to manage that is—for you to know—as little as you can."

There was a pause. It came for Miss Prior's relief. She thought it a miracle that Isabel Duroc's

vitality could so last, even with every care on her intent listener's part to calm and to check speech. That chief desirability, however, seemed impossible. Miss Prior's voice ended the brief silence.

"Very well—I'll take Leila."

The decision, the accent in it, lighted up something like absolute joy in the countenance of Isabel Duroc—or Isabel Stormonth, or whatever might have become her name before law, not bohemia. Miss Prior went on, hesitantly but clearly. "I'll keep her with me. I'll care my best for the child. I'll educate her, Belle, as well as I can, or can have it done. A good woman—such as you want her to grow up—she shall grow up, if the Lord and I can manage it. I've money enough, and to spare, for her. I'll try to make her happy—and to help her to marry a good man, too, if he comes around, by and by.... I've never thought of doing such a thing with any child in all my life. Maybe I'll make mistakes with her. But I'll try not to do so. And I'll teach her to love dearly her mother—by every thought of her—and to love me, too, all she can. Will that satisfy you, Belle?"

Feebly, the sick woman raised her other arm. It glided, chill, about Miss Prior's head, it drew her face a little lower—and her cheek was kissed—so passionately yet so coldly!

"God bless you, Lucia! Let her be your Leila. I don't deserve anything else—dying here. Let her be so—like your own child."

"She shall be so. But, Belle, you must give me a word about—about the child's father. Did you marry again?" Miss Prior was not unaware of the informalities of bohemian wedlock. "You've—

you've not been a bad woman, Belle, I'm sure, even if you did have to leave Captain Stormonth. You have had your ups and downs, of course, since. But ups and downs aren't always our fault."

"A bad woman? That depends on what you call good—you good woman. No—" again came the trace of a disdainful smile—"no, I guess I've not been bad. The Lord will judge that as He will. But I had my ups and downs, as you say, especially the downs. Oh, my God! I'm glad they're over, at last—now that Leila's to be looked after as I never could do it. It'll be like heaven for the child."

Like heaven for the child! An upbringing, probably for the most part, in a lonely country-village; simple nurture and care, not unlikely with tinges of unintended austerity in them, from a woman united to Leila by no tie of blood—a stranger to her mother, save for the memory of past school-days, when neither had been what to-day found them!

The mother seemed exhausted. She lay speechless, almost rigid, for a few instants. But her fingers still clasped Lucia Prior's firm, warm hand, as if in appeal to a solemn contract now ratified.

Dr. Delano's shadow, and then himself, appeared cautiously in the door, behind the actress's couch. He bent to Miss Prior.

"She has talked enough now—more than enough," he whispered. "It's a wonder that she's alive. You really must leave her. She'll kill herself, if this goes on."

But Isabel Duroc opened her eyes again instantly.

"I hope, madam, that you have said to my

old friend all that you feel most necessary," the Doctor began kindly. "And I may tell you that whatever you have to entrust to her goes into the safest memory and truest heart, that I know. You should be perfectly quiet now—for awhile. Please stay so."

"For awhile!" Isabel Duroc repeated, in vexation and a sudden return of energy. "When I've got to be quiet forever—so soon?" By a strong and dangerous effort she raised herself on her pillows. "Go out!" she said in a sort of desperate command. "Go out again. I've not finished. No—I can't be quiet. I've not come to the most important things—not till now. Go out."

Her insistence was painful to watch and to hear. Dr. Delano returned to the outer room. Again the two women looked at one another—left alone. Isabel sighed in an unspeakable weariness and helplessness. "Oh dear! So much that I ought to say to you, and no strength for any bit of it! That's hard." She continued, with a force in her failing voice that meant an effort of the most cruel sort, "You've promised me about Leila. I thank you with my last breath Lucia. If there's any God—well. He'll reward you. Remember, there isn't anyone can ever come between you, to take her from you... Put your hand in the front of my gown. There's something there."

Tremblingly, Miss Prior obeyed. Something there was indeed.

"You can't break the cord that it hangs by. Cut it. Be quick."

Miss Prior had her pocket-scissors. She severed, from around Isabel Duroc's neck, a strong silken cord, and withdrew that which it secured. In her
[hand was a

bag—so to call what could be more accurately described as a parcel. For its limited bulk, of only a few square inches, it had some perceptible weight. The corners were rounded; the trustworthy cord, just severed, was firmly sewn into it. Its wrapping was of soft, pale-coloured leather—thick kid—as if from a strong glove. It was stitched up tightly, rather than neatly. On one side of it were embroidered initials and a date; alike so faded that Miss Prior's swift glance, in semi-darkness, could not read them, or more than remark them as worked almost like those of a child at her needle. The full-bosomed frock had concealed the whole easily.

"You've got it?" asked Isabel, tremulously.

"Here it is." Miss Lucia laid it in Isabel's hand.

"Is it valuable, Belle?"

"Never mind, Lucia," came the answer, neither expected nor welcome. "I can't tell you—not you, not anybody. It's for Leila. It's sealed—inside."

"For Leila, Belle? And you can't tell me what's in it? It must be valuable—at least to her. Surely. You'd not have taken such care of it else. Oughtn't I to open it?"

"No, no!" The sick woman's excitement alarmed Miss Prior more than ever. This would not do! She moved to call Dr. Delano, in spite of his banishment. But Isabel Duroc kept her hand. "No, no! Wait! Listen! Don't think of opening it. It would be too soon—a great deal too soon! Listen to me, Lucia—I'll tell you what—I must. But promise me first—something. I'd ask you to swear to it; but the word of such a woman as you is better

than swearing. I'm done with stage-talk. Promise me that you'll keep that parcel—keep it just as it is—without opening it—without so much as even looking at it oftener than you can help—till Leila's got to be—let me think, how old is she?—well till she's twenty-one, or going to be married. Yes, till one or the other thing. Then you may open it, with her. Yes—she's to know about it then. Whatever's in it is hers. She owns it—now—always. But not even you must know too much about it—now."

This new charge, and its accompanying prohibitions, certainly were not agreeable to Lucia Prior. She had no objection to them from curiosity, a foible not hers at any time. But there seemed to be overmuch mystery in such a trust, and possibly overmuch responsibility.

"I—I wish you'd tell me what's inside of it, Belle," Miss Prior said slowly. "I'd rather be accountable for the matter more intelligently, dear; for Leila's sake as well as for my own."

"Never mind what's inside, Lucia. I tell you—that don't make any difference. It's been mine. I give it to Leila. Perhaps it's nothing so much, after all. I haven't said I know about that more than you do. And the less known, the less bother." She moved her head restlessly, and coughed slightly. In spite of that warning, she resumed her hoarse whisper. "Remember it is mine to give her. In time, she ought to have it. But you're to keep it till she's twenty-one. Or to marry that good man you spoke of. He'll protect her, as a husband should. And don't let her marry an actor."

"But Isabel," timidly protested Miss Prior,

"you forget. You say you can't tell me about this parcel. What about Leila's father? Has the one anything to do with the other? With *this*?" She pressed the packet against Isabel's hand, now colder than before. "In the village they may ask things. You see, I really ought—"

"No, no! You don't need to know!" came the half-strangling but peremptory answer. "Do—do—as I say." She went on, again raising herself and leaning forward her white face. "Mind you, Lucia, don't even look at the wrapper oftener than you must, until Leila and you open it. And you needn't put it in any bank. Let it stay with you both, always. Perhaps after all—it isn't worth while. I—I—you've promised me, haven't you? Tell me you have, Lucia."

"Yes, Belle—I promise," replied Miss Prior, in terror at such insistence, and striving to calm it.

"As to Leila—and him—I mean what you asked about—her father. He—you've—promised, Lucia. Oh, my God! Get the doctor! I—I can't speak—"

She fell back from the imprudent position attempted stubbornly during these last sentences. A red surge upon her lips marked their penalty.

"John! John!" called Miss Prior.

Dr. Delano and the two Osgoods came in swiftly. Several of the Criterion's little company had become free, by this time, to quit the stage. They were waiting, in anxiety, in the hall. But Dr. Delano wished no more spectators, however sympathetic.

"She's dying, Lucia," presently murmured the physician, as he raised his head. "I knew she could not hold out. It was only a question of

hours at most, poor woman. Now it's one of minutes. She will never speak again."

Sarah Osgood stepped into the hall. The frightened, quiet little girl was brought, once more, close to the mother's side. Even tears of sympathy, falling freely about her, did not make the little Leila weep. She had been trained to silence in too many rehearsals, and by too numerous scenes centering on lachrymose stage death-beds, for any realization that her mother was actually passing away before her eyes. She stood close to Isabel, and then laid her small face against the mother's arm, and kept it there, except when Sarah Osgood raised her to give the dying woman a kiss of farewell.

Miss Prior bent over mother and child. The packet was safe in her pocket. The injunctions as to its vague disposal, the sense of interrupted information, were still bewildering her thoughts, even more than the consciousness of responsibilities to the child thrust upon her, set down into her quiet life, within an hour.

Isabel Duroc eyes unclosed again. They rested with a look of relief—of reminder?—first upon Leila's head beside her, and next on Miss Lucia's strong, sincere face, only partially shadowed. She moved her fingers as if desirous of doing something with them.

Miss Lucia laid one of her own hands on the child's soft hair. Then, taking, unnoticed, the packet from its resting-place, she held it between her own left palm and that of Isabel. Another look thanked her. It was the last.

"She's gone," said Doctor Delano presently.

"Poor thing! Lucia, we must see some of these people—get at their personal interest in her. Sarah, suppose you put the child to bed—"

"No," interrupted Miss Lucia, calmly, "Sarah will give Leila to Hannah. Then I'll take her home with me, and put her to bed there. I'll come back, and be with you for awhile, Mrs. Osgood. John, I'll leave it to you to say what's necessary for to-night. The child's mine, my charge, after this. I've promised her mother."

Doctor Delano looked at her in surprise. But she said nothing more. The Doctor deferred questions.

Carried in Miss Prior's arms, and escorted by Hannah Persis, who found it a night of nights in dramatic bewilderments, little Leila reached the Prior house. She was put to bed. Miss Prior, the women of the hotel, and the few in the Original Criterion Company, moved about the inn, many hours, making ready, for her last tableau, their comrade; one summoned by the most authoritative of Stage-Managers, toward scenes we cannot guess, and into the presence of an Auditor, who is—let us believe it—ever charitable to all of us, fellow-actors in a drama whose meaning we do not know.

The small circle of "Laura Legrand's" co-workers in the Original Criterion, remained in Castro, over a night and day, to attend her funeral. They were awed and shocked, but not surprised, at the sudden end of her little career. During three weeks—the short time that she had been a member of the troupe—it had been a wonder to them how she could keep her feet, and play her nightly part.

Of her earlier self, of her professional past, of even her present—no useful detail could be gathered. The manager knew her only as "Laura Legrand"; an actress of vague experience, suddenly at hand to join his forces, from the wreck of another and little better company, dispersed in a Canadian city.

"I've thought, from first-off, she was a real lady," he said soberly. "She'd been on the road awhile, but not very long, I know. There was something genteel about her. But she couldn't act much." The leading-lady, tolerant of rivalries past, when in awed view of death, echoed the manager—"Yes, Mr. Pinkert, surely a lady." And in her coffin, Isabel Duroc looked wholly the lady; perhaps more so than for many a year—poor thing!

Her trunk came to Miss Lucia, by the manager's order, promptly. It was understood that Miss Prior and "Laura Legrand" had met before, in more than passing acquaintance: though nothing much was made known of how the intimacy had begun or was renewed. Miss Prior brooked no catechism. At the same time, the child's transference, from its wandering life to Miss Prior's home, was accepted of Castro.

In the trunk was relatively nothing. That is to say, its contents were alike valueless, either as biography or as intrinsic matter. A few stage-clothes and some less showy garments, photographs—all unmounted—among them, sad-faced and presumptively faithful, a likeness of Isabel, taken probably five or six years earlier, in a better gown than she owned in dying. That was almost all. No personal papers. Not a letter, not a journal, not a book with a name in it, not a newspaper, of clear use in her history.

"There wasn't even a trace of the companies or pieces that she'd played in," said Miss Lucia to Dr. Delano. "Likely she'd burned everything burnable."

"Ah, tried to wipe out stage-life along with the rest of her life, did she," he replied compassionately. "Well, perhaps she did wisely."

She was buried in the Prior plot in Castro's cemetery. Miss Prior and Dr. Delano sent brief notices of her death, to numerous American and English newspapers. Such references were to "Mrs. Arthur Stormonth, born Isabel Duroc, being also known, especially in stage-life, as Laura Legrand"; and to "Laura Legrand, born Isabel Duroc; formerly Mrs. Arthur Stormonth." If still another name were legally due, Miss Prior could not ascertain it: the more to her discomfort, since it might be one which was Leila's right. In such case, death had intercepted it, if Isabel Duroc had mean, in dying, to confide it. Her theatrical associates certainly had not known it. Leila might be really Leila—who? Not Leila Stormonth, Miss Prior had decided; though that surname would have answered troublesome questions conveniently, and was, perhaps, justifiable under such circumstances. Not just 'Duroc'—to the unkind and—perhaps—undeserved discredit of the mother. Miss Prior did not care to invite interrogatory and bothersome gossip, by calling the child "Leila Duroc Prior." So it was decided to call her, perhaps not unrightfully, Leila Legrand.

In the shady cemetery, Miss Prior erected a stone, plain, handsome, solid. Cut upon it was—"Isabel May Duroc—During Her Stage-Life Known as "Laura Legrand"—Wife of Captain Arthur Stormonth--In

Her Youth of Sword Hill, near Baltimore, Maryland—Who Died Suddenly in This Village—Aged about Thirty-Four Years." The date of the death followed.

No letters or journals, addressed to one or another carefully-chosen post, at home or abroad, brought back an answer to the least enlargement of the story of the dead wanderer. By the time Leila was running to school, past the cemetery where her hapless mother slept, and in the long summer vacation-days when the child romped merrily with the other Castro children, down in the Prior meadows, by the Penobscot, small Leila was not conscious that she ever had needed, or might have desired, any nearer protectress than the lady whom she called "Aunt Lucia." No wiser and kinder one could she have known, there was a certainty; and the little girl's affection, for her guardian was boundless.

Time passes calmly in a spot like Castro. Thirteen years are no trifle in effect on human life, however little seem to alter here and there the aspects of fields, woods, hills and village-houses already weather-worn. So much of a period must be slipped into this story, before the reader continues its course.

III.

It was a warm afternoon in September. Protracted heat throughout the northeastern seaboard had lengthened the stay of "summer people" in Castro. At the "Arcadian" (now quite a patriarchal hotel, much enlarged on its ancient beginnings) and

in the cottages and boarding-houses that had grown more numerous by at least a dozen, there were yet plenty of idlers to sit on the "piazzas," speculating about temperatures in Boston or New York, to skim the Inlet with a shallop, or to stroll down to the wharves to see the afternoon-boat from Portland come in. Castro had not grown materially with the lapse of times and seasons. There were new shops, new cottages for smart owners or lessees. The Orthodox Church had heightened its steeple. One or two of the village-streets had grown longer, and all of them were shadier. Change of the external had meddled little more with Castro than that.

The whistle of the *Megunticook* screamed across the harbour. The customary movement-general began on the part of all citizens, able-bodied and tolerably unoccupied. Mr. Cairn, the latest proprietor of "The Arcadian," clapped on his hat, expedited the descent of the hotel "stage," and went down in it to the dock, though expecting no special guests. The expressmen and the livery-stable contingent collected in the sheds. Young women added themselves, in the cheerfulness of their pink and white gowns, to the younger groups. The *Megunticook's* bell rang, while her white wake churned and broadened in the oblique sunshine.

"Do you happen to know who that party is?" asked Bray, the "news-agent," of one of the hackmen, as a man walked slowly past them through the crowd, and sat down on a barrel at some distance. He was looking at the *Megunticook*, as she approached the wharf steadily and gracefully. His looking could be either of listlessness or of some intentness of mind—just as one might have fancied it.

"No, I don't. But he boards to Mrs. Hen Barkhurst's. I know that. Came there last month. I took him over."

"His name's Redruth," said Dennet, the expressman. "Englishman—or mebbe—Canuck. His baggage's all over London labels."

"Should think he'd be up to the Arcadian then," remarked Bray. "Seems kind of a swell for Mrs. Barkhurst's place, don't he?"

"If to wear a lot of old clothes and look good in 'em, and to talk with an 'ah' in front of some words is swell English—why, I suppose he may be swell," answered Dennet. "He's a literary man, I take it, or something of that kind. He came from New York. Heard him say so. Slow-going, quiet, easy sort of feller. Mrs. Barkhurst told our Hetty so. She says he acts as if he'd seen considerable of the world, too." Dennet interrupted his gossip, and called out to a passer-by, to know "if Asa'd got that spring-bed for Bill, yet." The *Megunticook* grazed the wharf and threw out her lines.

The loiterer called Redruth kept to his somewhat isolated sitting-place, but ran his eye keenly over the passengers who descended. Redruth was a tall, well-made man, of moderate height. His age would have been set down as in the neighborhood of thirty. It happened to be more. His face was tanned. It did indeed suggest the individual who has fared far, here and there, in the journey of life; who probably will find little new to him in best or worst halting-places. The ethics of that face surely were a question. He had deep blue eyes and a fair mustache. His clothes, good but by no means new, were

worn, as the discriminating expressman had observed, with the grace, or indifference, of a gentleman.

Again his sight seemed to sharpen—involuntarily. He rose, stretched himself, and strolled across to the baggage-sheds. Dennet was there, taking orders of a passenger, almost the last to quit the *Megunticook*.

As Dennet departed, shouldering a trunk, nobody, not even the ubiquitous Bray, was within several yards of Redruth and the new-comer. Redruth leaned over a box, and affected to read the address on it. Therewith he spoke to the newly-arrived traveller—spoke softly, clearly. But he said what he had to say without even glancing at him.

"You go to Mrs. Henry Barkhurst's—not to Mrs. Sam's. There are two—you remember?"

"Certainly. Anything done yet?" returned the stranger quickly.

"Nothing. Details as I thought. Don't talk here. I'll be at the place—the Lookout, on Spruce Ridge, at five—Bruce's old observatory, they call it, too. You can't miss finding it." There was no dropping or adding of "h" from either speaker.

"Right," replied the other. His accent in that monosyllable hinted him as of the United States, whatever was his association with his interlocutor. "In an hour," he added.

No third party had been heeding the swift interview. Redruth walked away, leisurely, carelessly overlooking the bustle around the steamer. The man left alone in the express-shed stepped into a buckboard, and was driven off to Mrs. Barkhurst's.

The sun being still high and clear in the after-

noon-sky, the hill-top known to Castro as Spruce Ridge was an acceptably breezy spot when Redruth, from the appointed rendezvous, watched his friend coming up the rocky path, and crossing slopes of waste clearing, toward the old and crazy 'observatory' crowning the height. There was really nothing more than two platforms, built upon four naked pine-trunks, chance neighbors. Rude open stairways, much like ladders, led the venturesome climber from the juniper-bushes and granite at the foot, up to the top. An old-time citizen of the place, now dead, an enthusiast as to the fair and wide view from the Ridge, had built the look-out. But the villagers no longer rambled so far. The Fort's restored glacis was sufficient for an evening-walk or prospect. Save for an occasional picnic, the green summit of Spruce Ridge was abandoned to crows and to cows. This afternoon it was as an ideal of a lonely hilltop, commanding land and sea, on a translucent day in Maine.

Standing on the lowest step of the rickety stair, Redruth waved his straw hat to his guest, in the stiffish wind that swept across the firs and huckleberry-bushes. "This way, old man!" he called out cheerily. Meeting aloof from all witnesses thus, for a second time, the manner of greeting between the two was quite unlike the odd reserve of the wharf-interview. The newcomer overleaped a broken wall and hurried up. They shook hands cordially, exchanging some civil phrases as to the journey to Castro. "Well, well, I tell you I'm glad you're here, Silver!" Redruth exclaimed. "Did you have any trouble in finding this place? Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Trouble? None. Your letter, and a word from

a boy down below there, brought me straight up. But I don't fancy this sort of a spot for talking. I must say! We might as well be in the sky. Will the good folks take us for angels, if they happen to be looking up?"

"We don't stay here, I assure you," returned Redruth. "I spoke of this spot only as a rendezvous. I'll take you to a place where you'll be pleased, with not much danger of our being seen by any one in Castro or heaven."

They quitted the summit. A green cow-track descended a side of the Ridge, behind the Castro approach. It wound down, among spruce and fir and fern, deflecting to right and left alternately. Anon came another tiny and more sinuous path, overshadowed with foliage and full of a soft verdant light.

"Here we are!" said Redruth shortly, breaking aside from the track for several yards farther.

They were in a small dell of singular beauty and seclusion. It was shut in and over, by quivering larches, interspersed by tall pines. An irregular succession of shallow, yellowish ledges cropped out of the concave, spongy floor of moss and pine-needles. Around the rocks grew stunted golden rod and bracken; and a clump of cardinal flowers made a brilliant flash of red in one angle. The nook was a sort of natural private-cabinet, fit for Nature's consultations with Time, concerning flora and seasons in Castro; or one suited for mere human talk, on secrets of any degree of seriousness. Serious enough, in their way, were the secrets to be spoken of in so calm retirement, on that charming afternoon.

"This is fine!" exclaimed Silver approvingly.

He dropped upon a broken boulder, and fanned himself with his hat. "Decidedly. How did you light on it?"

"Oh, in pottering about the place, as soon as I got here," answered Redruth, seating himself beside the other, but declining the cigar Silver offered. "I'm glad you fancy it. Not a soul from the town rambles here nowadays. Lord!—it's by far the most attractive spot and society I've discovered in Castro—d—d hole that Castro is! I'm glad, on some accounts, I've had no luck in cultivating local gentry. I prefer trees."

"Shouldn't be so unsocial, Redruth," protested Silver, coaxing his wavering match. "Pretty village—lots of nice people, probably."

"May be. But I declare to you—on my word, I believe it!—that another fortnight, alone, bored, anxious, in such a town, a sort of jumping-off place of creation and the States—well, it would drive me to hasheesh, no matter what I expected to gain by it! It's *assommant*."

"Ass-ommong?" repeated Silver. "What's that? Oh, French, I suppose—with an English accent! And so Castro's a dull, hole is it? So! Kindly remember—I warned you that you wouldn't find it a community with open arms for unendorsed visitors. That was my own little impression of it. But I suspect you've been annoyed at not getting to work sooner. Also may be you're shy at exerting your fascinations, from the level of Mrs. Barkhurst's symposium. Symposium's a Greek word—the change for your 'ass-ommong.' Patience, patience, beloved Redruth! Must I remind you of how much we both require a superior article of it, in this little affair?"

And, moreover, if you think New York City's a specially frigid place to be stuck fast in, when a hot September comes, why, my lad, you're mistaken. Give me Castro."

There was a hint, or more than that, of at least an intellectual and temperamental patronage, in Silver's tone. It could not have soothed Redruth, though he seemed accustomed to it. As Silver sat there, speaking lightly, smoking calmly, there were hinted distinctions between them, obvious and odd. Redruth's leisureliness and indifference of bearing, such as had stamped him before Castro observers, had departed. He moved quickly, he spoke fast, he gesticulated with an air of a man who has nerves. His eyes were full of eagerness and suppressed inquiry. On the other hand, Silver, some years the junior, slight of shape, dark in type, with clear-cut and not less refined features, showed more of reserved force, one might have said of leadership, in whatever interested them and had brought them together. Evidently they were two men particularly well-mated for enterprise, provided the balance of power were always adequately adjusted. It seemed so to be now; most amicably adjusted withal.

"Well, as aforesaid, I'm glad you're here, Castro being Castro. But, see here, Silver, I tell you plainly that your scheme is all wrong. It means wasted time. We've not time to burn, even if enough for patience. I may have my shortcomings, and I admit that I don't like people such as I take Castro socially to be. I admit I don't understand how I'm going, how you are going, to ingratiate yourself here, enough to help us a farthing's worth! I'm disgusted!—be-

fore we've fairly begun the d—d foolishness. Take the bull by the horns, I say! Let your shilly-shally go to the—moon."

Silver smiled.

"Wait just a bit, before we discuss the bull-fighting, or the moon, and so on," he began. "I'm sorry you've been so worsted. But then, I hardly expected anything else. You—you're too modest or too unattractive—or too repellant. Maybe too much just Redruth. Now if Castro was only New York! Why, you'd have been leasted by all Fifth Avenue by this time—hail-fellow with the smartest set. Tell me, first, two or three things please. You found the grave? Surely? Off over there, I suppose, in that cemetery I noticed, as the boat came in."

"Yes. The name's on the stone. Date and all are exactly as I transcribed them. The friend, this Miss Prior, attended to it."

"Have you met Miss Prior? Or the young lady?"

"By no means. Nor am I likely to meet them, nor anybody else! Not unless I came here as a licensed vendor—or licensed preacher. Of all people in the place, too, those two women are the least likely for a man to meet."

"But you've seen them?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen them—in passing. It was hard work for me to do even that—to get to know them by sight. They live in a big, yellow house, not far from here. I'll show it to you, as we go back, over the hill. It's by the cemetery, as I wrote you."

"Thanks. I think I identified the big yellow

house, as I came up here, by the said cemetery. Is the young lady attractive? Or are you too prejudiced to bother for such unimportant attentions as judgment on a girl's looks?"

"No—yes—I suppose one would call her pretty," returned Redruth disconnectedly. "I've hardly thought."

"Ah! That's a pity... And you feel no doubt as to who her mother was, Redruth? There's the point you and I are most interested in, my friend, even if we can be sentimental—in business. Is *that* part of the girl's story so cast-iron, so conclusive as you have written me? You see," his voice hardened, and he looked keenly at the young Englishman, "we really can't afford to have you make any blunder as to that. Barking up a wrong tree, as we say in the States, is the worst and noisiest way of wasting time I'm aware of. Besides which, it has the vice of letting one's neighbors into one's business-intentions—whether successes or failures."

"Her mother? Of course, of course!" exclaimed Redruth impatiently.

"There is no possible mistake there? What of her age?" asked Silver.

"Do you suppose I failed to be sure of that? The history of the girl isn't much of a secret in the village. Even the fishing-people know it. The chemist told me the whole story. There's no great mystery, no fuss, about it. It's merely one of the few things that people in Castro have forgotten to talk-over. Mrs. Duroc—Stormonth—Legrand—or whatever she ought to have called herself, came here one night, with a traveling troupe. Here she died—on the

stage, I believe. This Miss Prior somehow had known her, was with her, promised to look after the child, and adopted it. So she's brought the girl up. Leila Legrand's her name. Quite like a story-princess, eh?—one of your Yankee princesses, that is! She's to be a kind of heiress, too, I suppose"—

"She probably is one now," interpolated Silver sharply.

"As for identity, dates—oh, they're unmistakable. Every important detail is clear in the affair. There used to be a doctor in the village, who knew more about it. But he's dead."

"I see. And in all the facts that you have managed to collect from—the fishing-people and and the chemist—and other leading local persons, nothing has survived in the way of a legend as to just what effects Mrs. Duroc-Stormonth left behind her in Castro? I mean, besides Miss Leila Legrand?"

"Nothing. How often must I say so? I've sounded and inquired wherever I could. Nothing."

"That is to say—nothing, with the important exception of what Miss Prior,—her ward, and even somebody else—very likely—may know. Such knowledge, naturally, can be merely—all we don't know." Silver paused a moment as Redruth ejaculated an angry word. "By the by, failing an introduction to the ladies, and so to the inside of the yellow house by the cemetery, have you really taken those long looks at it from the outside?"

"I have."

"Foolish boy! Not necessary. You shall know it by heart soon, on cordial invitation. Indeed you'd have that cordial invitation for yourself and

friend, as an asset this minute. Redruth, if you'd made the ingratiating, British-nobility use of time that you ought to have done. Ordinary American social successes, like myself, can't do that. Still—think how many of the first mansions in the country I've—visited. Visited for evenings together, as pleasure and business. A propos, any dogs?"

"No."

"Many servants?"

"Two. But only a woman sleeps in the place. The man goes home of nights."

"Ah," said Silver gently. He laid his head a little back against the rock rising behind him, and sent white rings rings into the air, watching a butterfly flutter over a fern. A sudden abstraction seemed to seize him. There came a long silence.

"Confound it, Silver!" Redruth exclaimed. "What the devil are you dreaming? What do you propose to *do*? Why don't you say something? Did you meet me here, to smoke into the sky? You act as if you were asleep. Am I to understand that you are satisfied with my progress, under your orders? Or, perhaps, that you've sense enough to see that this is a fool's way in which you've been fussing about helping—me? Will you start in to work in my way, your way, or what way?"

"In my own way. And in yours too," Silver answered slowly, with the tranquility of a tutor ignoring a pupil's restlessness. "Steady—don't be so alert. It'll tire you. I propose to do a good deal of work soon. Certainly nothing without your help—just as at present." He gave his companion a shrewd look. Then he went on firmly. "I object however to

haste and to error. It was to avoid both, that I urged your trying to cover a bit of the ground; to meet some of the people maybe still interested. Better gather the first essential facts, before we take off our coats—and shoes. You don't seem either to have acquired such useful knowledge, or to see reason for it. You want to dive into the water, head-first, even at the risk of smashing your skull. You are willing to take trouble on uncertainty, you incline to take chances that are too much chances. And so you are nettled against me, because I am not as childish as yourself! Come, now!"

"I admit risks. But I don't see much danger."

"Ah? But I see it, see it more clearly than usual. It's just as easy to reach the criminal dock, my boy, from Castro as from Whitechapel Road or the Bowery. Indeed, it's easier, I fancy! I don't love hard labour. I've not your noble heroism. And to waste it possibly, mind I say possibly, by a fool's errand? By the Lord, I won't help you in that, you may be sure!"

"We'll do no business if we stick to such views of it! If you're so nervous, why did put your finger in my pie?"

"No business to move slowly, have I? Listen to me. What do we know—*know*? What have we settled. Does it all amount to more than that Isabel Stormonth died here, and was buried here, leaving the child to Miss Prior. The lady you have identified, and the girl too—I grant you that."

"Go on," said Redruth. "Thanks."

"But a few months before Mrs. Stormonth dies, she again has certainly written the Luque woman;

Mrs. Stormonth being at that time travelling with a theater-troupe in Louisiana. She is aware that she cannot hold out much longer. She is not sure that she can ever see her child again. The child is in care of some party, clear up in Montreal. Mrs. Stormonth sees death before her. So, very sensibly, if she cannot get to the child, she will send to the child's care-takers in Montreal, safe in a sealed parcel, the only article of value that she has to leave her. Valuable enough, by G—d!—the Eye."

"Hush!" ejaculated Redruth, glancing nervously around their wooded asylum.

"I know when I'm safe from eavesdropping," pursued Silver calmly. "I repeat it—the Eye. But, equally prudently, the Eye is to be kept sealed up; that, above all things. It must not be negotiated, not known for what it is, until the dangers, in England or here, of rather too much talk on a delicate topic are past; apparently not till the girl's of age, and so able to dispose of the Eye quietly—independently. So Mrs. Stormonth asks Berthe Luque—hoping Berthe still to be alive—to try some day to meet or write the child; and even if she cannot care for her—to look after the child's benefiting by the matter of the Eye. All this, inasmuch as the Luque woman somehow has been intrigued in the curious business, all along, with Mrs. Stormonth."

"I should say she was!" exclaimed Redruth. "And a nice partner for the lady! She and William Virgil! A choice pair!"

"Partners aren't always choosers, nor equals in social life, Redruth. Observe ourselves," said Silver

laughing. "Do you think I should otherwise stoop to be pal to one of the effete aristocracy of England? Far be it from me, Redruth, far! But I resume. In Louisiana, though very ill indeed, Mrs. Stormonth survives; quite beyond her expectations. She need not have written that wise, or unwise, letter to Berthe Luque. Better, perhaps for some, worse for us, had she not! However, Mrs. Stormonth reaches Montreal, on tour, in some few months. She is apparently much better. She takes the little girl. The child goes along with Mrs. Stormonth, on her professional touring. And probably goes, too, the Eye. Unluckily for us, very possibly it goes—not. For we must doubt; and my dear Redruth, your warm enthusiasm makes you too careless of sad possibilities. No! Perhaps not the Eye after all! Mrs. Stormonth happens to reach Castro, within some weeks. She unexpectedly dies here. The child does not go back to Montreal. She stays, she becomes the adopted Miss Legrand. Of that, there is no question, I repeat—cheerfully. But, Redruth, even your valuable powers of discovery, and your busy social fortnight in Castro, it seems, cannot prove that the Eye came to, or remained in Castro! Much less, if it is in this place to-day. It is still our great q. e. d.; which is the Latin for "look before you leap. Selah."

Redruth said nothing, though Silver resumed his cigar, and afforded him opportunity. He was calmed by Silver's satirically judicial attitude toward whatever their curious joint enterprise might essay.

"You see? We've got no further than a troublesome incertitude, my dear boy. And it may be some

time before we go on better. For—observe. If Mrs. Stormonth carried out her first plan of turning over the Eye, under seal, so to speak, to whomever might take the child, not excepting this Miss Prior—actually without letting out what she was leaving behind for the child's future benefit, and if—rather unlikely, I think—the deposit is incog with the old lady this minute, why, there would be a pleasing likelihood of our making its acquaintance, even if we do not make Castro's. On the other hand, and very much on the other hand, perhaps Mrs. Stormonth gave Miss Prior the Eye for what it was, in confidence; and told her that she must get rid of her it, at once. Perhaps Miss Prior couldn't trouble self with the instructions; knows no more than you do, where the Eye now is. Possibly, Miss Leila does—or did know—prematurely. Perhaps it's still the Eye, intact—bless it! Perhaps it's scattered about the world, like the limbs of Osiris! It may be, at this minute, in Mrs. Stormonth's coffin, over in the Cemetery! Or perhaps (excuse my many 'perhapses'—they make you nervous, I fear) the Eye is lost, strayed, even stolen! Worst of all, though intact, it may be in a good bank in Portland—or Paris. In any case, it's still very much lost—so far as we are concerned. Oh, quite likely a fool's errand, yes, all this kind effort of ours to find it."

"On that we are agreed," said Redruth, "if you mean that everything except the first premises is a riddle, and may turn out a joke—of a certain kind. To that, I say 'yes,' as I said before I met you—"

"And took me into this fatiguing partnership," Silver observed. "Now, the first idea that we came

to any conclusion on, for our mutual comfort—as one used to say at football-games in my college, when two men knocked each other's wind out—the first thing we agreed, was that before we risked professional rummaging we would learn everything we could as to whether it was worth while to rummage at all! You undertook to come here first. You came. I could follow you, as a stranger to you—you a stranger to me. Our Castro encounter would be that of chance acquaintances. We would stay a few weeks here, trying to meet socially people in the place, concerned in knowing anything,—and pump them! We would resume our natural rôles in life, my dear Redruth—gentlemen, gentlemen of elegant leisure. We would ingratiate ourselves with Castro's respectability and virtue. Chance introductions, a friendly manner, little attentions, an interest in the town, in the churches, the Sunday School—and so on. Nothing flash nor forward. All commonplace and civil. Thus we'd meet naturally, just as naturally try to make ourselves agreeable to two people—Miss Prior and her pretty protégée. If they didn't exactly force state-secrets and jewellery on us, why, at least we'd make use of a calling-acquaintance to know the plan of the Prior palazzo. Then, if we felt really encouraged to believe that the thing we wish for, even more than a social autumn in Maine, is to be found in the yellow palace—why, we would care for its future. If we should ascertain it as not there, but far, far, in some better home, as the hymn says, why, we retire from Castro, if not from our enterprise. Castro mourns us. We have been saved—bother. But I

fear you find less pleasing the effort at starting our social boom, Redruth, than a real English gentleman should. You've cooled down more and more each letter. You want to be rash, as rash can be; to pick a pocket before you know that it has the penny in it! You're foolish! And—and—oh, you sometimes make me extremely tired, Redruth!"

"Damn it, Silver! Do you call it suddenly cooling down and shirking, my doing my best? I've been hanging about here three weeks, four weeks, scraping acquaintances leading to nothing, one after another? Finding that people who would amount to anything I can't interest—nor can any other such stranger? Haven't I been going to church piously, and even to church-fairs, and pricing lots in the village, subscribing to the Fresh-Air Fund—and so on? I tell you, I didn't know what kind of a place Castro was! You don't—yet. The whole town is alike. The best set fight shy of all summer-people! There's no crack to slip into, in a community like this Castro. No! It's not that Miss Prior and the girl only are conservatives. Everybody is quite as much as so our two ladies. Polite, of course, in a contented haughty, Yankee provincialism. And Englishmen aren't white blackbirds here. Even Californians aren't. I suppose it's typical New England blue-blood and airs."

"Towns like Castro have a right to such luxuries, you see," Silver returned, "—almost as much as have a hard-working, virtuous, British nobility. Sad indifference to one of its scions, unintroduced—unlabeled. Now, Redruth, I wonder how it would have been if I had done what I discussed and

what you didn't fancy? Suppose me instead of you, these weeks, to be as a wolf in—clover? What if I—"

"You? I'd be pleased to see you try it!"

"Would you. Perhaps I may give you the pleasure then. Oh, I am not put out that you doubt my gifts! I don't dare to be surprised, if you feel that I'd be a fool to stumble in where a swell—or ex-swell—Englishman has failed to tread. All the same, I'm by no means sure I might not make good use of the time it would take me. Don't smile so skeptically—please don't!—you wound me. Perhaps, however, I understand our free and enlightened citizens, in a place like Castro, better than you. Possibly I could play the part necessary, with gratifying results, even though I've not figured much on the upper crust of society during some seasons, as the papers call them. I've talents in reserve. Do you care to give me a chance to prove them?"

"I don't care for all this chaff. I'm waiting for work, not play-acting."

"I'm talking of work, too. But I still hold that the play-acting, as you put it, is a wise and easy preliminary. You favour the *fortiter in modo*. That's you. It should be led up by the *suaviter in re*. That's me. Excuse my Latin habit. It's my recumbency—these trees—"Tityre, tu," etcetera. I repeat it, may I try?"

"I don't understand what you want. I don't choose to waste more time."

"I shall not waste any. Suppose you promise that, for one week, you will try not to be restive? That, for just one week, you will not not bother me by advice, or anything else? I am to be allowed to try humbly for a social success! I am to combat

in the arena of your defeat. I am to see if I cannot induce Castro to accept us ; the very parsons to admire us ; Miss Prior to invite us to call ; Miss Legrand to smile on us !—and our sojourn here to be henceforth one of distinct popularity. In a word, I am to be allowed to see if I cannot win my way, our way, and justify the good sense of my tactics ? Come now, can I ? ”

“ Are you serious ? ” asked Redruth, in sneering discontent.

“ Absolutely serious. Do you consent ? ”

“ At the end of—a week, is it ?—I am to revise our course, if I don’t wish you to idle about any longer ? ”

“ Precisely.”

It was evidently a dogged reluctance to yield more points to Silver, rather than the point itself, which held back Redruth’s assent to a proposal that he regarded contemptuously. But Silver’s quiet domination over Redruth, by personality, as well as his dependence on Silver’s aid in their enterprise seemed again potent.

“ All right. Only I’m d—d tired of foolishness ! ” he said sulkily. “ The days count.”

“ What is the latest that you care to go to California ? ”

“ By the end of November, if I can raise the money for that affair there. Otherwise no use to go at all.”

“ In other words, if we raise the Eye,” said Silver, —“ *lift* it up. It’s to be a case of *levabo oculos meos* as says King David says. Well, I think I’m not asking too much delay, for foolishness, as you

call it, in a trial-trip of my rustic and rusty breeding? Am I to have my week?"

"Yes," replied Redruth, smiling vaguely. "Just your week."

"It's a bargain. Thank you. I shall surprise you, Redruth. I shall surprise you! And myself."

Redruth did not answer. He was resting again on his elbow, staring with a frown at the fennel growing by his knee. So stretched out and preoccupied, with his strong, dissipated face sombre even in the sunlight, he was rather the ideal for some sentimental painter, Munich-schooled, of a man who, starting out in life with not too much capital of conscience or prudence, has been shunted from the track, further and further, by moral gravitation—on the down grade. A handsome *dégringolé* still: but a combination now of indolence and energy, of vitiated resources of temperament and mind, and of cloudy fatalism. Such men Redruth are born to be directly their own ruin, or to be ruined by influences selfishly more alert... He watched a red leaf fall. The leaf and his environment, this afternoon, brought back to him the quiet woods he had wandered into at Aix-les-Bains, a year before; discouraged, furious, with almost the last relics of a small fortune—never husbanded, but once sufficient—reft from him. He was playing now a higher stake than in a card-club. His game was unfamiliar and dangerous. It ought to end in success, if audacity counted toward success. Ah, for that swift departure, in the bright hour of success!... Well, he might fail. But he might win!

IV

Silver interrupted Redruth's reflections.

"I've something to show you that I've not yet had time to produce, Redruth. It's literature, in a way. I thought proper to put business before literature."

"What is it?" asked his companion, incuriously.

"In the hotel, yesterday, I happened to come upon some copies of *Rollack's Veracities*—that ever-fragrant social chronicle! None of them very new numbers. Looking through them, I found that the longest contribution concerns you."

Redruth awakened. He turned to Silver, with his blue eyes wide open; eyes the more striking in colour by the *bistre* circles beneath them. To find *Rollack's Veracities* was interested in him, to the extent of paragraphs of greater or lesser length and accuracy or inaccuracy, was an experience to which recent years had made him accustomed. He had not been so favored, in a considerable time. But it was not in pleasurable anticipation that he exclaimed:

"The *Veracities*? Beastly, sneaking, lying London thing! Retailing all the scourgings of the club-gossips and assizes! And what has it to give to the world about me now."

"Considerable. Allow me, though, to correct you. *Rollack's* is beastly, and it sneaks, and it does live, I dare say, by the club-gossips and assizes. But it seldom lies, Redruth. If it lied more, there would be more libel-suits from the *h'*-English and French nobility and gentry—decayed or in full power and glory. *Rollack's* has a way of being queerly well-informed when it comes to biography and

obituary. I don't know quite of which class this is. So take it and read it, and tell me. I've marked."

He tossed Redruth two square, thick, canary-covered periodicals; being copies of the most successful of a class of journalistic gadflies, lately more largely represented than the non-inquisitive wish. Wholly conscienceless and wholly pitiless, except where prudence held comment in check; peculiarly well-informed, as Silver had remarked; and edited with a certain impudent address, *Rollack's Veracities* was a vast success. To many a household, or to chiefs thereof, had it been a gall of bitterness. To many heads it was a sword of Damocles. Especially intent on the law-courts, it excelled in setting forth every relevant, and irrelevant fact, provided the fact was of scandalous interest, which had become public property, or could become such, to entertainment of casual readers. Again and again, the tenacious memory of its staff pinned to a name, in death-list or marriage-notices, a forgotten or long-hidden tale of pertinacious truth—of lively social shame. Indiscretion with *Rollack's* was a science, scandal was an art. People reviled it, but they bought it; always in curiosity, often in fear.

Redruth had turned over a page. His eyes fell on Silver's pencil-marks. He began to read, intently. The number was indeed several weeks old.

"The death of a man of no public account and of little private interest, as such interest goes, William Michael Virgil, in his seventy-second year, occurred at Barnovers, Surrey, on the ninth of last month. Virgil's name recalls an odd chapter of fa-

mily-history, not lacking in the dramatic. It is likely to be remembered, at least in part, by many persons in fashionable or unfashionable British society.' "

"Virgil dead!" Redruth looked up from his reading. "And I was just thinking of him! I fancied he'd, gone years ago. Good Lord!"

"Good riddance, you mean!" returned Silver harshly. "And your William Michael's not gone to the Lord, I imagine. But that don't make any difference to you now. From what you've told me, and from what Rollack happens to say in that article, you got all you could out of Mr. William Michael Virgil, langsyne. Read the thing out loud. I don't mind hearing it again. It's long, but juicy."

Redruth shifted his position nearer to his companion. Leaning against the rock, with Silver at full length beside him, he continued aloud.

"William Michael Virgil for many years, and when relatively a young man, was the valet, secretary-in-ordinary, confidant, body-guard and generally Leporello and *âme damnée*, all in a model servant's capacity, of the late Earl of Norcross. We refer to that notorious sporting character, who died, years ago, in Vienna, after having been very much alive for all of his mortal years. Virgil, the son of a tinsmith in Islington, was a man of considerable brains and tact, and was tolerably educated. He made himself indispensable to a nobleman who was never virtuous, and who speedily ceased to trouble himself to be respected. Lord Norcross married, early, his second-cousin, Lady Ottilia B—. From her he separated, or rather say that Lady Norcross was

separated from him within a few years after their union; in, so to say, amicable—not legal—severance. Lady Norcross retained custody of the only child, a son. Both parents desired such plan. The son, sole survivor of a family historically ill-starred, can be mentioned as showing himself, in England and on the Continent, as a chip of the parental block, in many a fibre. Little by little, he has hidden his vices and follies in social strata where those who are his equals by birth hear less of them or of him. At last accounts, Rudyard Redruth, present Earl of Norcross, was living under an assumed name in a cheerful demesne of the Riviera; returned from the less perfect, but more picturesque, civilization of Paraguay.' "

"A flattering paragraph for my father and myself!" laughed Redruth cynically. "I might add a bit to it of later intelligence. Of myself that is. As to my father, wherever he's gone to—"

"Read on, pray," said Silver lazily. "Don't be theological."

"At the final, remediless smash of Lord Norcross, which occurred in connection with a racing-season of awful memory to his generation, the fine collection of paintings, long notable as part of the estate, and the remnants of that once equally famous collection of jewels, also associated with the family-name, were included in the available assets—after some contest."

"Among the jewels was especially expected the presence, and price, of that extraordinary diamond, hereditary during some generations in the Redruth line, and known to a world of jewellers, in and out

of the United Kingdom, as "The Norcross Eye." Mounted plainly (according to some accounts, in a mere silver quadrangle) its purchase occurred before 1848, by Lord Norcross's grandfather. The cost, at that time, advanced on five thousand pounds; but such a sum could not fail to be far short of all values soon succeeding. The stone, quadrangular in form, and of magnificent luminosity and purity, weighed not less than twenty-five carats. It could be recut to great advantage of intact effect; or else it could be made into at least half-a-dozen stones of large size, fractions of the great original, all of finest water, absolutely white; and probably there would be sundry lesser derivatives—admirable small brilliants. It was not recut, nor diminished in any degree or way, during the life of its first owner, so far as evidence presently will prove. During the financial stress of Lord Norcross, many jewellers tried to purchase the gem; especially some dealers, who would have subdivided it for a large profit, if disposing of the results separately. Other offers were, of course, with the idea of reselling the stone intact, to the highest bid obtainable. The stone—through an *incident galant*, in quite the early days of its ownership—had received the odd nickname mentioned—'The Norcross Eye'. So referred to now, it was 'unseen but unforget', by the elect of the trade. Its advent at last, to public view and to sale, was expected with lively preparations among high lapidaries. Bids for 'The Norcross Eye', in fact anticipated the Norcross sale—months ahead."

"But alas!—the stone was not forthcoming. By depositions on the part of Lord Norcross, also of a

former guest of the family, also of William Virgil, and of several other servants, it was attested that the Eye had been destroyed, or stolen, about five years previous to the bankruptcy of Lord Norcross, in the fire which consumed the family-seat in Surrey. At this event, many of the finest jewels of the Collection, temporarily in the house, were lost; not to be recovered. With this statement, after careful examination, the creditors were obliged to be content. The absence of the Eye, the ornament *par excellence* so hoped for, lessened the receipts of the sale by much.' "

" ' Lord Norcross, however, after his bankruptcy and selling-up, did not assume the rags of a beggar, nor beggarly dejection. He spent less and lived far quieter, it is true. But he paid his way, with apparent facility. Presently, too, a considerable wind-fall came to him—a sum of money which he succeeded in retaining, though the Jews murmured against him. He even managed to arrange comfortably for long sojourns in London; and so continued to set our city a shining example of a truly un-Puritan peer. So passed a time; and then his lordship's name became known in a new and notable matter—one of lively social comment.' "

" ' Among Lord Norcross's younger cronies, after his second innings with fortune began, was Captain Arthur S—. We omit his name, lest certain of the gentleman's few relatives—few he had—yet live, and so can blush that he lived. Captain S— was not to their comfort. He was a gambler and a drunkard. Along with that, he was a man actually maniacal when thoroughly under the influence of

liquor. He was known to be brutal, as well as unfaithful, to his wife—a young American lady of Baltimore, whom he had married to her utter misfortune. The wife's toleration of her husband, and her show of at least external regard for him, were themes of a good deal of comment and sympathy in the town-set in which the pair had come to meet Lord Norcross. Nevertheless, Mrs. S— seemed a gay member of gay society. After a time, rumour did assert, not too unkindly, that she was disposed to find consolation for her husband's neglect and ill-treatment of her; acting on the perennial matrimonial theory that two wrongs make right enough for people to please themselves.' "

" ' Within a little time, it was observed that Lord Norcross took particular interest in young Mrs. S—. It was asserted that the interest was wholly platonic; almost paternal. Not impossibly, it then was such. Young Captain S— appeared so to accept it. He became more and more intimate with his noble friend. He allowed privileges nearer, and more truly confidential, to his noble friend. It was reported that several times his noble friend intervened between the drunken husband and a terrified wife, when the mad fury of an inebriate broke over her. It was whispered, too, that the noble friend paid club-dues and household debts, if not milliners, ' dress-makers ' and grocers' bills; generally being guardian-angel to an unhappy ménage. He really appears to have tried actively to keep Captain S— within bounds of ordinary, vulgar dissipation, and of every-day marital harshness. All of which friendliness, let us hope was on a plane to Lord Norcross's credit. In any

case, it was the status, until occurred a dramatic climax of this queerly triangular history.' "

" 'What we have so far related, rested merely on ordinary confidences, gossip and town-acceptance. But for most of what now follows, William Michael Virgil, just deceased, in the odour of respectability if not at all of sanctity, is almost the only authority. Much of it reposes on his oath, in open court; as will be seen.' "

" 'During the winter of 18—, Captain S—'s abuse of his wife reached a degree that decided her on soon quitting him. Why she did not resort to divorce proceedings is not clear. It is supposed that she fancied that her husband had expectations; of which, if undivorced, she might some day be the beneficiary. They had no family—luckily. On a grim, early evening, Mrs. S— appeared at the apartment of Lord Norcross, abruptly. She informed Lord Norcross that her husband had furiously assaulted her, in a fit of *mania a potu*. She was wounded—even bleeding. Captain S—had driven her into the street—almost. He had sworn that he would kill her—" he hated her so damnably." Lord Norcross immediately proposed to Mrs. S— to leave Captain S—, and England, at once—that night. He urged and argued, with much warmth. Mrs. S— in a good deal of bewilderment, at last consented. William Virgil was already entirely acquainted with the lady's perplexities and with his master's interest in them; partly so by Lord Norcross's confidences, but largely by judicious eavesdropping, as is etiquette from all well-trained, upright men-servants. Mrs. S— would not even return to her house. Lord Norcross accordingly

furnished her, then and there, with ample funds for flight. He and Virgil even assisted her in some indispensable shopping, for an half-hour or so. That night, Mrs. S— was put into the express for the Channel, Paris being her destination.' "

" ' The same evening, Lord Norcross, accompanied by Virgil, visited Captain S—. They found him in a pitiable state of alcoholic dementia. He knew nothing of his wife's desertion. He did not even suspect it. The servants, who fancied Mrs. S— to be at a neighbour's house, had been obliged, as before this date, forcibly to restrain their master. It proved to be no ordinary attack of his liquor-madness. Never had he been so intractable. It was needful, next day, to commit Captain S— to the care of a private institution. Lord Norcross superintended the installation, with the generous kindness of one who might some day need such offices for himself. In this retreat, Captain S— remained several weeks, narrowly escaping death. Unluckily he mended. At length, as soon as sanity and shame came to the reprobate, Lord Norcross told him of Mrs. S—'s flight; carefully concealing his own special knowledge of the incident, his acquaintance with Mrs. S—'s whereabouts (though he was in constant correspondence with the lady) and, in short, all his share in the affair. He declared Mrs. S—, in his opinion to be wholly unfindable; thanks to her fear, her anger and her resolution. He read Captain S— solemn, if friendly, sermons; full of fraternal rebuke and regret. Captain S— however, was not disposed to be sermonized, nor to feel grieved. To tell truth, he was wholly tired of his wife. He did not press

inquiries for her. He behaved, in other words, like the sottish, heartless hound that he was.' "

" ' He came from his retreat. Within a month, he had forgotten his wife, and most of his chums withal, in an intimacy with a well-known equestrienne. Some years sped. He died, penniless, of delirium tremens, at Pau. *Et voilà pour lui!*—as old tales say.' "

" ' Within about a month after Mrs. S—'s departure—which fact, with her whereabouts, had actually escaped the knowledge of other than half-a-dozen persons—Lord Norcross followed her to Vienna. William Virgil accompanied him. Mrs. S—was living in Vienna, in even more circumspect privacy than in Paris. She had lodgings with her maid, a French girl named Berthe Luque, in a small hotel in the Josephstadt. Lord Norcross took some rooms there. This act—as the maid told Virgil—greatly perturbed and irritated her mistress. The maid heard Mrs. S—remonstrate with Lord Norcross at once, on such a proceeding, as likely to "injure her character," and to falsify motives of her recent step. Far from yielding to her wishes, Lord Norcross remained at the hotel. He began now not merely to act the part of a disinterested and temporary protector and friend, but to disclose a new quality of regard for Mrs. S—. It gave Mrs. S— much surprise and distress. That is, it so did, according to this gospel of Virgil; or shall we say, gospel of Sainte-Luque? ' "

" ' Berthe Luque, soon on the best of terms with Virgil, compared her daily notes, and exchanged her eavesdroppings for his, with praiseworthy regularity. Both of them soon came to the conclusion that Lord

Norcross was throwing aside a mask. Mrs. S—had not been the object of his compassion, so much as of his passion. His interest in her, and in her husband had been anything but—disinterested. Mrs. S—was now paying the price of her confidence, by struggling to keep at bay a dangerous friend. After a fortnight or three weeks, Mrs. S—intimated to Bertha Luque that she could sustain the situation no longer. She would run away from Lord Norcross as precipitately as she had run from Captain S—; for the sake of her honour and peace. She would go back to America, there to do what she could—probably on the stage—to support herself.' ”

“ ‘ So Mrs. S— began to prepare for her second hegira. She packed her trunks, secretly. But a new incident came. One evening, Lord Norcross visited Mrs. S— in her apartment. Lately he had played much—had lost much. He was excited, but not really seriously under the influence of liquor; a weakness that seldom betrayed him, because, during recent years, he had been warned that grave constitutional dangers would result from excess—an hereditary penalty. The instant he appeared, Berthe Luque kindly concealed Virgil and herself in a comfortable, airy closet, opening from a bed-chamber, directly into the drawing-room. The interview proved a stormy one. Lord Norcross threw away all restraint. He implored Mrs. S— to dismiss her self-respect, and conventionalities; to accept of his protection, in that word's least honourable sense. He declared that he loved her “to madness,” and that she would be “his salvation”. Mrs. S— violently rejected his Lordship's advances and offers. She

accused him of having influenced her to leave Captain S— solely "to ruin her for life." Lord Norcross denied the charge, and was vehement in his protests that pity had been parent to love; while, in any case, Mrs. S—"had led him on;"—anticipating a situation which she now, for some reason, did not care to encourage. Mrs. S—was so indignant at this charge that she was quite incoherent. But she was more indignant when Lord Norcross accused her of having already compromised herself with other men, 'not to speak at all of himself,' to a degree that made her now 'just a heartless hypocrite.' Lord Norcross went on, charging her with 'trying to get out of it,' because he was 'going through with his money again—she was afraid that he couldn't pay her bills.' Mrs. S— several times already, had ordered him to leave her presence, during the altercation. She now threatened to call the proprietor of the hotel. Thereupon Lord Norcross became even more extraordinarily excited. He actually fell on his knees. Almost in tears, he demanded forgiveness of Mrs. S—; called her an angel, and so on. But, for all that, he seemed unable to think that the frightened and scandalized lady would not accede to his insulting pleading.' "

" 'Mrs. S— was vainly trying to induce his lordship to rise and 'to talk rationally to her,' even if he would not retire, and so avoid a scandal in the hotel. A table was between them. Lord Norcross was leaning forward on it—almost on his knees. He exclaimed that he had one thing that he would give her, then and there, 'to show much he cared for her'—something that 'would make her rich for-

ever—the famous Norcross Eye—yes, and there were a lot more trinkets for him to hand over to any woman he loved—plenty, in spite of all the Jews and courts in England.’ And thereupon did Virgil and Berthe Luque, to the former’s amazement, see the noble peer pull out, from his trousers-pocket, the great gem in question, unmistakably, along with two or three other ornaments—stones set and unset; dropping them all slowly upon the table. Berthe Luque at once remarked the Eye, though she did not appreciate its value, and so could not feel surprise such as Virgil’s, at seeing brought to light, so carelessly and unexpectedly, a financial asset long ago generally believed to be vanished from earth! Virgil was accustomed frequently to know exactly the contents of his noble master’s pocket, as Virgil admitted. But just how, when, and where the Eye came there, not to speak of the other gems—even Virgil never could divine that! ”

“ Virgil saw Mrs. S— catch up the Eye, the nearest stone to hand. She threw it into Lord Norcross’s face, the stone striking him on the mouth. Drawing back quickly, and pushing over the table on him, Mrs. S— began weeping bitterly, declaring that she ‘ had not a friend in the world to save her from insult.’ Then they saw Lord Norcross grope about with his hands, in perfect silence. He picked up the rejected stones, including the Eye, and dropped them all back into his pocket. He got to his feet, and most quietly begged pardon of Mrs. S— for ‘ having misunderstood her ’—declared again that he ‘ had never felt toward any other woman as for her ’; but that he ‘ would never again refer to the topic.’

He declared that, 'spite of all, Mrs. S— could always depend on his aid, just the same, as a friend forever.' He 'would meet her in the morning.' Lord Norcross then left Mrs. S—, who became very hysterical, and needed her maid's services.' "

The reader paused. He laid down one copy of "Rollack's," and continued the story, in the next issue; where it was resumed, after a line or so of connective. A moment passed. His auditor said nothing.

" ' Lord Norcross returned to his own rooms, where Virgil presently found him. He was drinking brandy—seemed confused, dejected and sullen. Some acquaintances coming in, he played at cards with them, for a couple of hours, abstractedly; losing considerable money. Virgil, being anxious, not only for his master's welfare, but that the precious contents of his pockets should not be disclosed to comparative strangers, kept a close watch of all the party. Suddenly Lord Norcross excused himself. He called Virgil into the next apartment; and, sitting down at a desk, proceeded fairly carefully—deliberately—to write a note. It was to Mrs. S—. Next, Lord Norcross pulled up, out of its alarmingly careless lodging, the magnificent Eye. Keeping his back to Virgil, he handled the ornament—turning it over in the light; and evidently was considering some query connected with the jewel. Virgil affected to be engaged with other matters than watching; but nothing escaped him. Lord Norcross next took a piece of note-paper. He folded it around the stone.

He thereupon sealed parcel and note, in one envelope. He bade Virgil carry that envelope immediately to Mrs. S—, and 'not to wait any answer.' On Virgil's slight demurring, Lord Norcross seemed suspicious of his having seen or heard more than he should do, and assaulted Virgil. So Virgil duly went his errand to Mrs. S—.' "

" 'On the way, or just before it, naturally, Virgil cleverly unsealed the envelope and opened it. He examined the great stone with interest, and read the note. Virgil swore that he repeated it, *verbatim*, before the court, as thus: "Dearest Isabel. You may not want me, or the "Eye" but here it is; and I wish it, as I am, to be yours, henceforth and forever. It will go for stakes to-night, or some other night, if I keep it any longer. Don't you let out about it, for a good long while. Better not have it cut up, even then; but that as you find best. It is yours forever, I say, just as I am. I could not do you much good, but much good may it do you.—Norcross.—*p.s.* I will keep my word to you." Virgil considered such a gift a dubious proceeding. He was, in fact, perfectly aghast. But Virgil was on no plane to oppose, or to profit by opposing. So he resealed the note and parcel. He found Mrs. S—too engaged to see him at once. Finally she came. He gave her, as if absolutely intact, the enclosures. The maid, Berthe Luque, also was present, as Mrs. S— received parcel and note—and read the note slowly.' "

" 'And here comes the source of all the after-troubles of the luckless Virgil— by what should have been their barrier! For, Virgil has always declared that Mrs. S— carefully read the note, 'handled the

big stone as if perplexed'—and 'made some inquiries of him as to his master's state and occupation.' Last, at Virgil's 'very respectful suggestion,' that Lord Norcross did not expect any answer, she locked up the note and the jewel, before his eyes, and Berthe Luque's, in a small strong-box, fetched from a trunk. She was holding that box in her hands, as Virgil retired. 'Thank Lord Norcross, and say that I will communicate with him shortly. Also that I will do as he desires,' she said. That message Virgil proceeded to carry back to his master.' "

" 'He did not deliver it. He found Lord Norcross senseless, on the floor of his parlor. His guests were in great perturbation, trying to recover him from what seemed to be apoplexy. One of the party was a surgeon—or had been such. They got his lordship to bed. They could not bring him to consciousness. Mrs. S— was informed of his sudden indisposition. She did not come to its scene. She quitted the hotel, and Vienna, at midnight, with Berthe Luque. She left neither address nor message, to enable any one to trace her. Lord Norcross died in course of the early morning, of apoplexy, or heart-failure. Mrs. S'—s name was never-mentioned in connection with that eventful night. Virgil never set eyes again on the unfortunate lady ; never came really and definitely to know her whereabouts again.' "

" 'The eclipsed Lady Norcross and the son, Rudyard Redruth, now come forward in this history, as not hitherto. Virgil telegraphed them, and to his lordship's solicitors. Lady Norcross occasionally had received business-communications through them, as representing her erratic husband. What was to

he inherited came to the heir. Virgil was of considerable aid to the solicitors, in settling up matters for the benefit of young Lord Norcross, who duly attained his majority, though not until after his long-suffering mother had deceased. But Virgil in all his information, did not mention to young Lord Norcross, nor to the lawyers, nor to anybody, the curious and important circumstances of the reappearance of the Eye and of its abrupt presentation to Mrs. S—. This bit of reticence, later, was not accounted unto Virgil for righteousness—alas! Some jewels—only a few—which were found in Lord Norcross's possession, duly passed to the heir. They were of considerable, but not exceptional, worth. It was not clear that they had ever been a part of the Collection—now dispersed. The former creditors did not undertake proceedings as to them. The present Lord Norcross probably has *not* retained them.' "

["No, he has not," said the reader grimly. He laughed, not merrily however, and sang out harshly the phrase of the once-famous 'Indiana et Charlemagne'—'J'ai beaucoup de choses—au Mont de Piété.' He went on with *Rollack's* :]

"The new Lord Norcross did not keep Virgil, as servant, philosopher and friend; though in other respects the new peer has seemed quite of his father's preferences. There was some disagreement. Soon Virgil went to a new master, then to another, and so was much in travel. In course of some seasons, he met, in London, his old friend Berthe Luque, and gladly entered into new confidences and flirtations with her. They had much to talk of. Where was Mrs. S—? Berthe could not tell. Mrs. S—had written

Berthe sometimes, on various errands, being in America. Mrs. S— had gone thither, within a week of that hasty leaving of Vienna. At Berthe's last accounts, which Virgil thought intentionally vague, Mrs. S— was travelling as an actress in the States. Berthe was thinking of visiting the States; if so, she would try to meet her former mistress. Possibly Mrs. S— did not know, even now, that Captain S— was dead. So talked Virgil and Berthe, in amiable privacy. But that was not all. Virgil, unhappily, in the expansion of renewing acquaintance with Luque Berthe, who was a fine-appearing woman, went much further than was discreet. For, within a few months of their company-keeping and reminiscence-ing, Virgil was charged by Berthe with breach of promise of marriage; and on his declining to be coerced, he found himself sued, not by Berthe Luque, and not confessedly on account of playing Lothario, but with a much more unexpected sort of case to face.' "

" 'The revengeful Berthe had gone to young Lord Norcross. To him she had confided a circumstantial and full story of how William Virgil, in Vienna, had retained, stolen, sold or otherwise disposed of the Norcross Eye; wickedly, astutely and for his own profit! That romantic Vienna incident, between Norcross *père*, and Mrs. S—? Berthe swore that she had seen and heard Mrs. S— indignantly return the Eye to William Virgil, in the short interview at the B— Hotel, directing him 'to give it back to Lord Norcross at once.' According to Berthe Luque, William had taken advantage of circumstances, to cheat even the young heir, exactly as the Norcross

creditors aforetime had been cheated. Virgil, so swore Berthe, knew all about the Eye; and he ought to be made to tell whatever he knew.' "

" ' Now, with the details of this famous chapter of law, so many persons to-day, as we have said, are acquainted, that we shall not indicate them in this threnody on William Michael Virgil. A terribly mixed-up and twisted-out proceeding it proved, with very diverse interests bound up in it. Berthe Luque and William Virgil assailed, as with scalpels, each other's characters. Their respective solicitors helped them to ventilate secrets, and to define the privileges, of domestics, in a way to make gentry quake at the thought of having even a single valet or maid under one's roof! In starting out to fasten a felony on Virgil, young Lord Norcross probably hoped to frighten William, and definitely to learn whether the jewel, with other gems, could be recovered. He did not succeed. Instead of that disclosure, the characters of father and son were made a spectacle! The creditors of the dead nobleman twined some new interests into the coil. Virgil was also charged with perjury, by some of them, on account of his former testimony. All and everything was brought into daylight; of course the affairs of Captain S— and Mrs. S— particularly. There was endless examining and cross-examining. Virgil was firm. Berthe Luque held her own strategical outpost of offense, with amazing spirit and shrewdness.' "

["By Jove, she did! She did indeed!" exclaimed Redruth. "What a she-devil! Why, I used to think she'd fly out of the witness-box at Virgil! Or out of her skin!"]

“ ‘ But the witness supremely desired by Lord Norcross and by William Virgil and the legal aids, for chiefest testimony of all, was not to be got at. For, no advertising, no search, discovered Mrs. S—. America is a large place. Berthe Luque may have known how to reach her former employer ; but Berthe threw no light on her whereabouts. Possibly, if alive, in declined fortunes and a vagrant life, Mrs. S— never heard of the trial. If she did hear, certainly it was not to her interest to appear. That is to say, if (as Virgil claimed) the Norcross Eye, had ever become her property, and was so still.’ ”

“ ‘ Virgil was acquitted. The evidence, against him, however direct, was insufficient. Whereupon William promptly retired into private life. The perjury-suits, and so on, also lapsed to harmlessness. All the personages faded to oblivion. Virgil, we dare say, has not been referred to, in club or newspaper, a score of times since ; and his death seems ‘ unheralded and unsung ’ until this present *oration funèbre*. His fair and vengeful enemy, Berthe Luque, disappeared as wholly as her sometime mistress. Berthe may be dead, or still living obscurely in some Continental corner—or (some people think it worse than decease) she may be a permanent resident of America. The mystery, the truth, or falsehood of the story told by her never will be known—at least, such is the probability. Of the reappearance of the Eye, that night, in the hands of Lord Norcross, some persons never have had a moral doubt; nor of the fact that he had concealed it before his bankruptcy, to the defrauding of his creditors, by wilful perjury on his part, and by more or less wilful or involuntary perjury

on the part of Virgil and others, who had sworn to what they did not know. Wherever the Eye went last, or may be to-day: if it be still a stone kept intact, or if long ago recut—if cloven up into smaller stones—is all query. Chances are that it was not cut up at all. It may be, at this minute, in some jeweller's safe. Or at the bottom of a trunk, or of a—sea. The outlook of the priceless optic indeed seems dimmed, like the vision of some life-long captive, in a mediæval dungeon of oblivion and darkness."

"' As for young Lord Norcross, who might be glad of the discovery and ownership of the jewel, provided he could dispose of it, whole or piecemeal, without the knowledge of some hundreds of tradesmen and money-lenders—why, of that gentleman—*non ragioniam, ma guarda e passa!* He is submerged. Who now may know him has the acquaintance of a member of society even less useful than were his father's valet, and the maid of his father's *protégée*. They were at least helpful in showing how unwise it is for us to keep domestics, unless they are blind, deaf and dumb; and also how much debauchery and blackguardism a man of rank can include in his character, and, in some measure, can transmit to his posterity.'"

Rollack's Veracities was finished. Redruth—to-day so unaccustomed to style himself, however rightfully, Lord Norcross—folded the two journals, in a scornful silence. Silver did not break the pause at once—he was engaged in badgering a caterpillar with a wisp of moss. But soon he threw the wisp away, hand lolled over toward Redruth.

"Well? What does Lord Norcross think of *Rollack's* kind interest in his family-history?"

"That it is rather correctly set forth," answered Redruth, "Quite. Your defense of *Rollack's* is borne out! If I could believe that newspapers generally contain as much truth, I would read them more; and I'd value higher their racing-tips and weather prophecies. Now, who do you suppose ever got up that article? Whoever *could* get it up?"

"Who? Nobody—in a social sense. Perhaps only some clever party, who happened to be a reporter during the trial. No more intimate family-friend, I fancy. Such things usually are compilations; often by several hands."

"It's extraordinary! But there's one mistake in it—"

"Only one? I see two," said Silver. "The first is that the writer did not add that the present Lord Norcross, with a smash at his back, that made no stir at home, after some seasons of adventures not exactly for Sunday-School reading, is now in the State of Maine, U. S. A; travelling under the simpler name of Redruth. Also—that he is here, not only because he believed, and still believes, William Virgil's story, but—thanks to a strange bit of news which might be part of it—because he hopes to find the Eye, in a certain curiously quiet little hiding-place, where it—may be. For such delicate purpose—recovering the Eye from its present owner—that is to say from the daughter of the woman to whom his father gave it—he proposes to use arts extraordinary, or ordinary"—

Redruth interrupted, smiling disagreeably enough:

"—Including vulgar theft, a burglary, or any other trick, by which Felix Silver, formerly a graduate of Princeton University, and, later, graduate of two—"

"—Theological seminaries, that is to say, impenitentiaries," put in Silver composedly, "can assist his noble friend, and can profit himself. Birds of a feather make hay together. Don't look so nettled, Redruth. I am willing to be called a night-hawk—even a jay—even a jail-bird. Anything but a lion, or a unicorn!"

"So be it! But Silver, listen. If that note which my father sent to Mrs. Stormonth is not yet with the "Eye"? That note! It is important for us."

"Quite true. When we are assured of the Eye, my boy, we will take pains to see that we get any documents in the case as well. How true is the old proverb—that finding is having!—though, after all, what matter proverbs? As I have told you, Redruth, told you with sweet and soothing repetition, first let us know where the Eye is not, before we undertake—to look for it where it is."

"We?"

"I beg pardon. We'll say 'I.' With such amateur assistance as my unskilled client shall lend. A fine distinction—Lord Norcross! By the way, will you kindly allow me to see the priest's letter again?"

Redruth drew out from his pocket a dingy envelope. "Documents in the case," he observed. Silver took it, and the copies of *Rollack's*.

The letter was dated and postmarked only a few months earlier, from a small city in French Canada. By it, the Reverend Andrew Galgon, was requested by a confessed penitent, Mme Berthe Maille, for-

merly Berthe Luque, to make a communication, as soon as possible, to Lord Norcross. The woman had died in a hospital, the night before the writing of the letter; she being a widow, with no children. She desired Lord Norcross to be told that "certain very important proceedings—against W—V—," in which she had been of such importance that they might be considered of her instigation, had been unjust; being "the result of spite and falsehood" on her part. To her certain knowledge, and exactly as W—V— had declared, "the lady, Mrs. S—", had left Vienna, and England, with "the valuable article referred to" still in her possession. She, Bertha Maille-Luque, had heard several times during recent years, from Mrs. S—. Mrs. S— had written that she "still had it"; and that although it was lawfully her own, and while most anxious to dispose of it, she "dared not do so." Mrs. S— proposed to hold it indefinitely. Mrs. S—, in course of time, had written to Berthe Maille-Luque that, though still travelling as a professional actress, under the name of "Laura Legrand," she was remarried. The Frenchwoman inferred the husband to be named Legrand, on or off the stage. Mrs. S— had one child, a girl. From her she was separated. For the child's future she was anxious, in view of failing health. Finally had come a letter from Mrs. S—, the last. She was dangerously ill. She made various requests of Mrs. Maille-Luque; referred again to "the valuable article" as "still in existence"; said that she was most solicitous about it, for her little girl's sake—and so forth. She had "never allowed the child's father to know of the article." Mrs. Maille-Luque was considering what she

could do, or cared to do (this communication having gone first to England, and being much belated) when she had news of the decease of the lady at Castro ; as copied in a Canadian journal. At the same time, Mrs. Maille-Luque was badly injured, by a fall. She lay many weeks wholly helpless. Her case worsened. On learning that she was not to recover, she begged that the foregoing facts might be submitted to Lord Norcross, as a satisfaction to her troubled conscience. She did not know if now they could be of any service to him. She also implored V—'s pardon ; addressing V—, too, by the priest, as her messenger. These facts were cast into a brief, informal deposition by Father Galgon.

The clergyman, in forwarding it, added that the matter "would have no circulation through his chance knowledge of it." He would be pleased, however "to hear soon from Lord Norcross."

"From whom he did not receive even a civil note of thanks," said Silver, "and who did not trouble himself to inform old Mr. Virgil of the matter at all—lest he should spoil a dish of fat by making the chimney smoky ; and for fear there should be company asked to the feast, when none are desired."

"There shan't be much, if I have my way," Redruth observed with an oath. "No ! Whatever's in this, is for us ! It'll help to keep the wolf from our respective doors for quite a while—if the Eye is extant, and if we get it."

"I shall do what I can for *that*, oh, Redruth, Lord Norcross ! Verily ! If it can be got, it shall be got." Silver handed the priest's letter to Redruth, who dropped it, with several others, into his letter-

case, lying in the hollow behind the rocky seat. "But I'm to have my week? That's understood?"

"It's understood," Redruth replied, good-natured in a measure, after this long recitation of facts to make more probable in his imagination the existence near them of that which they had come to seek and to secure. Ah, that lustrous bit of valuable chemistry—geology—able to be a stepping-stone to newer, better fortunes for a bankrupt prince! Redruth would not make ducks and drakes of what it would fetch him. No indeed! He would reform—eschew evil, and its perils. He would honour his final chance to do so. Not by living at home; perhaps never as Lord Norcross. But as a respectable man—a gentleman; even if his closest companion and ally toward that change was now a professional thief, and he himself ready to be an amateur aid!

The faint strokes of the Castro clock came over the hill-top and down into their retreat. The sun was setting. It was six o'clock. The dell already was darkening. Redruth sprang up, catching at his various small belongings, and stuffing them into his pocket, with the *Rollack's*.

"We'll get no supper, man, unless we hurry! Mrs. Barkhurst's table is mathematical. And we must not appear at her door together—not till we're introduced."

They hurried up the long, dewy track, out into the upper clearing, and so back to the brow of the ridge. There they parted company, taking paths of different angles toward the village. Silver went down by the cemetery, casting a look at the yellow Prior house as he did so. He remarked two ladies

on its shaded porch. At Mrs. Barkhurst's board, he and Redruth again encountered each other. They were formally presented. They talked of the weather and of the countryside, until bed-time. Mrs. Barkhurst showed her latest guest into a cheerful room, on the opposite side of the same hall whence opened the chamber of "Mr. Redruth."

V.

It is not for every attractive woman, not even for every attractive young woman, to look beautiful when but an hour out of bed; subjected to the light of a bright morning shining on her, in common with the rest of creation. Solomon does not deliver himself of any recorded observation on this stray truth; but it certainly could not have escaped escaped so keen and qualified an observer of the sex. Even Guido's "Hours"—fine healthful creatures that they are, sporting about about Apollo's car (it is to be feared they are quite breakfastless, except perhaps for a cup of warm milk) are a trifle blowzy and material. For that matter, Apollo himself looks as if he could be improved, and made less haggard, by a touch of the preceding evening's sunset-rouge. Early rising is often rather too indirectly aesthetic.

Lella Legrand was an exception to this chance, that made amends for its harshness. As she came downstairs, with the sound of the coffee-mill in her ears, and walked briskly out on the porch for a breath of fresh air, there was nothing prettier in Castro to look at; which is saying a good deal. One may note here that Miss Lucia's home had been

christened—arbitrarily, formally and romantically—in its old age; even to being provided with a handsome stock of letter-paper, duly superscribed "Sunrise-Water, Castro (Maine) U. S. A." For Leila had declared, one fine day, "Look here, Aunt Lucia! Any such lovely old place as this one, with all that east and west water-view, has simply got to have a regular name, and a pretty name! I've been thinking a lot about one. Listen! The other morning, when I got up so early to see the sunrise, the name "Sunrise-Water" popped into my head. I think that it's about the right article. What do you think?"

"I think it's a piece of foolishness. But—as you please, child." And so "Sunrise-Water" was the accepted name.

Leila's gray eyes shone to-day with the soft clearness of a baby's. Her abundant hair was as radiant as ever a girl's locks need be. Her skin, a touch of tan in it, showed just the softness and degree of flush for pleasing a connoisseur in complexions. Her step, as she crossed to a farther corner, to make a weather-wise observation, had a grace and lightness that spoke much for the soundness of health in her tall young figure, as well as for her soundness of sleep. When she leaned outside of the railing, to break off a spray of red-flowering creeper, for the bell of her white frock, she was truly an attractive object for all eyes, especially masculine eyes, to dwell on. At that hour of the day, unfortunately, there were not many men nearer than the minister, in the parsonage, down the hill; he, most probably, absorbed already in early homiletics.

The tap of a stick made Leila turn, and call out a good-morning. Miss Prior had followed Leila's example. She advanced toward the sunlight, leaning somewhat heavily on a cane.

"Fine morning, child, isn't it?"

"Fine? Aunt Lucia, it's simply the most perfect one that ever dawned in Castro!—for our dear Sunrise-Water, or—anywhere." Leila waved a hand comprehensively, *urbi et orbi*. "Don't you feel well this morning? Don't you feel a great deal better even than yesterday? Don't you feel very, very—young?" These were enthusiastic exclamations and assertions, rather than questions. The girl came to Miss Prior and drew her toward the top of the steps. "You do, you know you do! It's such splendid weather for being better and young, and everything else that's nice!" There was in her voice a shade of sympathy for one not able to enjoy such sensations in the measure that Leila wished; an inability that seemed to reprove her own superabundant wellbeing.

"Yes, I think I do—I really think I do." Miss Lucia smiled, sighing ever so slightly in the next breath. "The sky's like the real Castro sky, for this time of year! Look at the harbor! It seems as if you could see every ripple between here and France." Holding Leila's hand, Miss Prior looked in delight over a vista, familiar but ever charming; the shady gardens, the green slopes and roofs of the village, the chain of islets, the flashing sea, the opal-colored sky. "Have you got something in particular on hand, this morning?"

"I have! I'm enormously inclined to go with Richard, to get the balsam for that big pillow for

his room. We'll call for Anna Trask ; and then, all of us, go to the Lighthouse Woods for it. With three, it won't be so tiresome. And Richard insists on having such a *big* pillow ! "

" Can Richard go ? "

" He said so yesterday. He's coming, or he'll send word why not. Anna and I can hunt him up. I want that pillow off my mind. Oh, to do anything out of doors to day will be delicious ! Besides, I want some ferns for Mary Kinnear—you know—a lot of us are to go to her house for tennis, this afternoon, and for supper after it—and a dance."

" And a high evening of it generally," interrupted Miss Prior, in amiable grinness. Nothing that Leila ever proposed to do, was against Miss Prior's goodwill, unless physical imprudence entered into the transaction. " I presume you'll not expect my chaperoning for your dissipation, any more than usual ? Tell Mrs. Kinnear, I resign forever, in her favour, and with pleasure." She paused. " I've had a deal of wakefulness lately, the dear knows why ! Night before last, I don't know what it was ailed me—but I couldn't sleep, as I told you. And I'd none too much rest last night. If you'll invent some kind of parties where they teach old people to get sound sleep, for eight or nine hours out of twenty-four, I'll invite myself to it, be sure ! "

" You poor dear ! " exclaimed Leila compassionately, pinning half of the spray of color in Miss Prior's belt. " I wish I could invent one ! So last night wasn't comfortable, either ? What is it ? Does your knee hurt you ? Or is it that pain in your side ? "

"No—nothing I can think of. Nervousness—bad dreams—wakefulness. But, finally, I half drop off, and—well, next thing I know it's daylight, thank goodness!"

"I wish you'd have the doctor. If you can't behave better, I'm not going to any more frivolities, down in the village. Wouldn't you rather I stayed home to-night?"

"Nonsense. Of course not! What good would that do? One anchorite in the family's enough! Neither you nor I gad about Castro, the way some of our best friends would just love to have us do! Richard'll fetch you home, I suppose?"

"I *rather* think Richard will!" replied Leila decisively. "I've told Richard that he's my property, just at present! He can be his own master, when he goes back to Cambridge. I'm sure there's nobody else I want, even if the village-boys were civil enough to ask me." There was a completeness and a candor in this declaration that might have flattered, had it been made with any other shade of sentimental proprietorship or promise. By its casual tone, the young gentleman so honoured might have been a negro factotum—or a police-dog.

"It's well you're both satisfied," remarked Miss Prior innocently. "Hark! There's Hannah's bell."

Its tinkle resounding through the hall, they passed into the cool, dim old house. On either side were deep rooms, sparsely furnished, full of the fresh morning atmosphere, if not of its full day. Miss Prior had a detestation of the fly-tribe, extending to the last of a season's buzzing generation; but she also detested the shut-upness of many Castro

dwelling. Sunrise-Water meant also airiness,—practical "sweetness and light" invited daily.

As Miss Lucia preceded Leila toward the breakfast-room, one would have found her much as Miss Lucia of that remoter time that had brought Leila to her. Miss Lucia's hair was not thinner, though it had grown gray enough. Her eyes were still keen; she rejected glasses, except of an evening. Her voice had kept most of its full, decisive New England ring. But in her figure and by the lines of her face, were suggested the invalidism that a carriage-accident had brought upon her, several summers earlier; one to cause her now-a-days frequent attacks of pain, and generally bringing a good deal of a permanent shock to her system. Indeed Miss Lucia now never walked without her staff. Within some months, bestirring herself in any rapid way had certainly grown most troublesome. She was easily excited, easily fatigued. It was not only in accordance with her doctor's counsel, but in key with her own feeling of what was acceptable, that she avoided agitation, and tried to take life easily. There was bustle enough in Leila's energetic movements and unlimited gifts for occupation. Miss Prior often wondered what these days of restricted personal activities would have been to her without this vivacious, unselfish, ever affectionate companion—this girl, the apple of Miss Prior's eye! For Leila's voice and Leila's step, around Sunrise-Water, Miss Prior listened, involuntary, all day. On Leila's plans and ideas all Miss Prior's were centered. To link Leila to a past of insecurity, sorrow and tragedy, was now not easy, even to Miss Prior. Moreover, Leila had

grown up with just sufficient knowledge of the circumstances bringing her to Castro, and to Miss Prior's guardianship, for judiciously sobering her high spirits, now and then; not more. Miss Prior had contrived to make the child's acquaintance with her mother's story into a happy medium. Leila quietly accepted such measure of it. Old Dr. Delano had urged Miss Prior to be reserved, rather than communicative of those disconnected (and not too secure) facts she could impart to Isabel Duroc's daughter. Such gentle discretion had saved Leila from morbidity, from many sad speculations and open questions or doubts, as to one who now was little more than a faded photograph in its frame—the owner of a few relics and trinkets of stage-wear—that hapless mother, almost a myth in Leila's heart.

Hannah Parks, also gray, dignified and much stouter than aforetime, beamed on the elder and the younger lady in matutinal cheeriness, as they sat down.

"Too much air, Miss Prior?" she interrogated. "If not, I'll just leave the windows as they be. I don't ask you, Miss Leila, though they're at your back, straight. It's never too cold or too hot for *you*. Butcher's boy told Mrs. Howell there was a white frost up at Bar Harbor, and over to Blue Hill, night before last. But I guess he's trying to make a cool story out of a cool spell."

"So long as the butcher's boy don't bring us tough steak, I expect we can put up with his fancy stories," said Miss Prior, as Leila finished operating the coffee-pot and milk-jug, with a dexterity that Miss Prior always found herself watching apprehensively;

though Leila never spilled a drop nor made an improvised mixture. "But these days are weather-breeders, I fancy. It seems casting up for a spell."

"I'm sure, I don't want the spell," Leila said positively, spreading her muffin with vigour. "I prefer to have it stay summer, *this* summer, just as long as it possibly can stay so! That's the worst of being too contented! You don't want changes that may make you dissatisfied. And--well--I'm in no hurry to be back in school again--especially if I'm not sure it's to be my last year there. As to that, Richard says--"

"It seems to me you pay a good deal more heed to what Richard says about school, and about other things, than is absolutely necessary," Miss Prior returned. "When it's a question of lawn-tennis, or golf, or dancing, or of fooling away time as you young people must, why, I've nothing to say!—I'm not expert on such topics. But when it comes to your education, I have some opinions and plans, I confess; and I haven't found yet any special reason to make them identical with Richard Trask's notions! There are some in his head that may not be exactly to my taste."

Miss Prior gave Leila a glance. Leila had dropped her eyes demurely on her plate. A faint smile seemed to express her conviction that Miss Prior had no wish to disparage seriously young Trask—Miss Lucia's pet young man, in Castro and in all the world.

"Not that I believe that Richard's a fool about anything. Not even in saying that a girl gets enough of books before a boy begins to do so; that she should stop because she has long skirts," concluded

Miss Lucia more urbanely.

"Queer! Now, I should rather think she could," returned Leila, who had inherited her mother's indifference to hard study, if few other traits that disturbed her guardian. "But then maybe I don't know any better than Richard. I can tell you tell you one thing though—Richard's got to study awfully hard this year. He says it's going to be a terrible grind."

"Grinding won't kill him I suspect. Richard needs some such experience, according to my lights—hard, practical digging, to offset all this musical craziness and artistic stuff, that's somehow inside of him. He needs to develop brains more; and organ-playing, and touch on a pianoforte, and kicking footballs, considerably less. Richard lacks balance."

"Really? I—I wish you wouldn't abuse Richard so, all at once," Leila answered smartly, looking up at Miss Prior, with wide eyes. "Anybody who didn't know just how to take it, would believe that you'd really like Richard to be just as commonplace and matter-of-fact and ordinary, as all the rest of the Castro boys. Richard's going to turn out all right; and better than that! And Richard's perfectly charming as he is. I don't want him any better balanced, or caring any less to play football, or the organ, if that means he's going to grow up like Tom Devoe or Arthur Justin, for instance. Anna thinks so, too, I know. And Richard's her own brother; and Anna isn't too easily pleased."

Miss Prior laughed; her shortest and best-humored laugh. She understood better than Leila how little did Richard Trask, as a personality artistic or practical, need championship before her. If not

so, Miss Prior would have been less complacent in countenancing, year by year, though with an apparent non-observance, a friendship that seemed to be growing toward another emotion, as the parties to it became less young boy and young girl together, along with Castro's rising generation. If Richard had been less admirable in the elderly lady's mind, she would not have said to herself so often, nor had she owned in concert with Mrs. Trask, "Yes, things go on very nicely, Sophia. Perhaps they'll do so by and by."

"I haven't wished Richard to duplicate Tom Devoe or Justin—so far as I remember," she went on, giving a reproving wave to the cat, stealing in behind Hannah. "But a young man now-a-days has got to amount to all that he can, or he's not likely to have any too easy a time in the world. Not Richard—nor anybody else—should be allowed to grow up a poor man of business, for the sake of letting him find out how much an artistic genius he may be. And Richard's got a name that calls for all he can become, to add to its credit."

"Well, I think he'll distinguish it quite as much as any of his Castro ancestors. Only I doubt if he does so in the general-store business. It seems to me that his song-writing, and his organ-playing particularly, are wonderful enough, when you think how little time he has for composing and practising. They say plenty about it in Cambridge; enough to honour that old sign on Dock Street! We may not think Dick's a genius, but some other people do. Clever people, too."

"Very likely," responded Miss Prior with muc

dryness. "In that case, if they—and Richard—have really decided the matter, it's just as well that Richard's father is likely to live and die a reasonably rich man. I've noticed that geniuses usually flourish better when they're provided with rich fathers; and some parents don't object to pay for their privileges. I dare say Judge Trask will be induced to take such a view, if Richard, and Richard's friends, exert enough eloquence on him."

The clematis at the west window, behind Leila, rustled violently. "They will exert themselves, Miss Lucia!" exclaimed a pleasant and youthful male voice. The voice proceeded from a head with a white tennis-cap on it, suddenly appearing between the vines. "When you get through talking about one's powers of eloquence with father, and particularly if you'll explain what I'm to use them in getting, I'll come in for a cup of coffee, with you and Leila."

Miss Prior nearly dropped her egg. She bestowed a sharp but kindly greeting on the intruder. Leila applauded Richard's advent in high glee.

"When you've got through eavesdropping over there, you may come," the older lady returned. "I'd admire to know how long you've been lurking outside?"

"Almost a quarter of a minute, I imagine," the young man answered. "I came up to know what Leila thinks about our going up to the Lighthouse Woods, this morning; for that fir-stuff, you know, Leila. Anna's ready any time."

"I'd as much as made up my mind, before I was well awake," Leila replied. "Run around,

and come in by the front door, like a sensible boy! No, no!—don't dare to try to get through those vines!" This, as Richard indeed began an alarming upward wriggle. "Go to the door! By that time I'll have your cup ready."

"Thanks. I prefer the kitchen way—like most tramps," Trask answered, disappearing. Presently he came in briskly, cap in hand, behind Hannah Persis. His hazel eyes shone with good humor and the diversion of a passage at arms with Miss Prior; an encounter devoid of terror to him. He sat down to his coffee and a muffin with what seemed to be a fine supplementary appetite, observing that he had "breakfasted an age ago."

"I must say, genius or not, you're becoming quite an early bird, now-a-days," observed Miss Prior approvingly, as he experimented on his coffee, added a large lump of sugar to it, and pulled the cat's tail, all in a turn of the hand. "I remember when your mother had trouble to get you down to your breakfast at all—she told me. A college-course is a great spur to a young man's bodily activities—or it can be, I see."

"Of course it is," laughed Trask, "though I haven't set my foot in the gymnasium a dozen times, since I went to Cambridge. I'm not selfish! There are some things I *do* feel I ought to leave to other men. I get along better with tennis. Or with diapason coupled to pedals," he added, giving Leila a side-look, and receiving something of the same sort in her covert approval. Miss Prior could be graciousness itself to Trask's tastes, in his presence; its cheerful manliness subdued her prejudices.

"Well—you might go farther, only to fare worse at the road's end," she said. "One man's meat's another's poison. Besides, I like you better strumming, than betting, or wild about billiard-tables. Ah, what's that you've got?" Richard had taken something from his waistcoat-pocket, and was holding it up for Leila's particular notice.

"I don't know. I picked it up, a few minutes ago, in the grass; down by the corner of the back-hedge." He held the object higher. "I didn't know but what it belonged to one of you, here in the house."

"Let me see it," demanded Leila. "It's nothing of ours, I'm sure. Is it, Aunt Lucia? Look."

Trask laid the article in Leila's extended palm. The two ladies bent forward in curiosity. It was a thin, curved oval of silver, oxydized, of the bigness of a half-dollar; polished on one convex side, and discolored on the other. In elaborate *repoussé* there ran a cipher-design of capital letters across it, and a narrow rim framed the whole.

"Why, it's for the top of a cane—or umbrella!" exclaimed Leila. "That's what it is! But it don't belong to any of us. That looks like an 'R'—don't it, Aunt Lucia?"

"Yes, rather more plainly 'R' than anything else. But there's an 'R,' too—another 'R.' Two 'R's," continued Miss Prior, deciphering "Who, pray, can Mr. Two-R's, or Mrs., or Miss Two-R's, be? Just where did you find it?"

"By the back-hedge," Trask answered, taking his odd *trouvaille* again, and turning it about. "You know where that gap is? On the edge of the field,

toward the village? It's the way I usually come in, when I don't cross to the front-hall. Or if I wish to hear myself severely talked over, by my best friends. It was lying a little off the path, toward the bee-hives, near the clump of altheas."

"On this side of the hedge?" asked Leila.

"Certainly. Near the altheas, I say."

Miss Prior looked disturbed. A suggestion from Leila cleared her forehead.

"Don't you remember that troop of excursion-people, who calmly came sailing down, through our garden, last week? From the Fort—you remember?—without so much as a word to us?"

Miss Prior remembered. "Oh, those boarding-house folks? Yes. Do you think one of 'em dropped it?"

"Certainly—and served them right. I wouldn't put myself out, to send a crier about with it," replied Leila. "But I wish they'd left the umbrella, too, while they were idling about here. Hannah's broken mine."

"May I see it, please, Mr. Richard?" asked Hannah Persis, at this juncture, preparing to set down a plate of hot buckwheats. Richard gave over his trophy, as exchange for the griddle-cakes.

Hannah considered the bit of silver intently, taking it to the window opposite Trask. To Richard's surprise, she gave him a suggestive look, as he answered her questions. It seemed to him that her raised eyebrows meant more than casual interest. Leila was busy with her knife and fork. Miss Prior was cutting bread. Yes, no mistake—Hannah bestowed on him again something distinctly resembling a private signal; if one of such uncertain

meaning that Trask was far more puzzled than quick to profit by it. Hannah came from the window.

"I'd like Mrs Howell to see it. She washes for some ladies at the hotel. Perhaps she knows something about an 'R' party there. It's handsome, ain't it, for such a small thing?"

Hannah returned to the kitchen. And in her so doing, Richard caught again that odd and would-be portentous glance—for himself. He decided to accept it as an intimation to change the subject forthwith.

"Hallo! There's a hornet sailing behind you, Miss Lucia!" he exclaimed promptly. A hornet there was. Amid the activities which followed, breakfast and the topic of the silver monogram were dismissed. Hannah came back sedately. Slipping the bit of silver into Richard's care, she mentioned that the painter was waiting in the kitchen-porch to know what color Miss Leila's new trellis was to have. Miss Prior and Leila hurried out, to decide. Hannah and Trask were alone.

"Now, Hannah, what means all that mopping and mowing?" demanded Richard melodramatically. "Do you know anything about this?" He took out the little disk. "Is it a marriage-certificate of yours? To a Mormon elder? Oh, Hannah!"

Hannah glanced in precaution towards the kitchen.

"No," she answered quickly, "but I'm more worried about it, now that I think things over, than if 'twas one."

"Worried?"

"Yes, worried! I've a notion, Mr. Richard, that it's a small part of something queer that's been going on near this house lately; though I can't say

just what. So I've kept still about it."

"Something queer? What do you mean? Ghosts?"

"No, of course not! Do you think I believe in spirits? I'm not a fool! Mr. Richard, there's been folks—real folks—*watching* this place lately. I'd rather 'twas ghosts than thieves."

"Nonsense! 'Folks watching?' Since when, Hannah?"

"A week—mebbe ten days. I've not missed nothing; and I've not cared to scare those two lambs out yonder, talking to Jim Davenport. But I'll bet a cooky that silver thing—it looks to *me* as if it came off a man's cane—belongs to the same business."

"A thief? Thieves? Hannah, Hannah! There's nothing portable in Castro, ever to bring a thief! There's been just one real thief heard of here, in years; and he couldn't even get away! What, pray, have you seen that makes you fancy that people, thieves—and thieves who use silver-handled umbrellas—canes with monograms!—would come poking about Miss Prior's plain, old house?"

Hannah reconnoitered. "Those two not coming in yet? Very well, see here. It was night before lasi, wasn't it, that you and Miss Leila went to the party at Mrs Bellew's? Yes? Then night before last it was, that I've to do with. It was after eleven o'clock. Miss Lucia was abed and asleep. I'd been sound asleep myself, for mebbe an hour. I can't rightly say what waked me up; but I suspect, 'twas that creaky shutter, on the old stable. At any rate, all of a sudden, there I was—broad awake as an owl. The moon was out bright, but

the weather was changing, and there's draught from my north window. So up I hopped, lest I'd be froze before morning. I'd just laid my hand on the window-sash, when it seemed to me that I heard something rustling, making a queer little noise, down in our back-garden, over toward the hedge. Just the place you spoke of, Mr. Richard."

"Where I came in this morning," assented Trask, in a low voice. Hannah continued:

"So I looked out, Mr. Richard, without moving so much as a blind. I don't know why I was so still; for I never expected to see anything different from what I see any clear evening. I thought it might be Howell's old cow—the lame one, that's everlastingly straying. Mr. Richard, I didn't see any cow; but I *did* see a man! I mean I saw a man's shadow—"

"A man's shadow?"

"Yes. My eyes fell right on those rose-o'-sharon bushes; and I tell you there was a man's shadow mixed up with their shadow!—both of 'em as black as ink. Oh you needn't laugh! A man there was, to make a man's shadow! First, he wasn't plain, and I was so startled that I thought I was a big goose to look. But presently I made the shadow out, and soon it came quite away from the bushes. He was behind 'em, whoever he was. First, the shadow moved a little this way, and then it went that way. Then, at last, it stood as still as a clothes-post."

"Hannah, Hannah! Did he serenade you? Did he banjo you, or mandoline you?" laughed Richard. "Oh, you needn't pretend you're not flattered, and not aware of what all this means! Coming events,

Hannah--coming events in rose-of-sharon bushes--they cast their shadows before!"

Hannah did not relish the pleasantry.

"Don't be silly, Mr. Richard! I saw just what I tell you. I watched it five minutes. It shifted around, alongside the hedge a good deal, into darker places. Whoever it was; it was a man, and I should say he was certainly after no good."

"If he was after you, it was no end of good. You're a treasure worth scientific burglary. But seriously, Hannah, didn't you see the silver-headed gentleman--the silver-caned gentleman--who took away his shadow when he went, but kindly left his monogram behind him?"

"I did not, Mr. Richard. I tried to; but I didn't want to stir, for fear he'd get sight of me."

"But why didn't you lean out, and yell?--raise some alarm?--send him about his business--or from it?" asked Trask more soberly. The incident troubled him. He looked again at the silver cipher.

"Didn't want to do that, till I saw more. However, I don't know but what I'd a-done something of the sort, specially if he came out plainer and nearer, which he didn't--but all at once he edged off into the hedge-corner, and disappeared like that!" Hannah snapped her thumb. "Yes, like that!"

"What do you suppose agitated the gentleman? Your cruel silence? Shattered hopes?" Richard inquired, incorrigibly. "Did you remain 'unseen, unheard, beloved afar,' by your unknown adorer, Hannah?"

"Surely. But maybe a window-shade flapped so loud that he heard it. At any rate, all at once the

shadow glided into the hedge-corner. I couldn't see it any more. I sat and sat there, and I just watched and watched, I tell you! I was watching. long after you brought Miss Leila home. If I'd not been afraid of letting on to Miss Leila and Miss Prior, I'd have asked you to wait, to rummage around the place a bit. But I wouldn't call. At last I did go down stairs though. Everything was right in the house, and nobody laid hands on me; though I wasn't a bit sure but what I'd be knocked over—I crept about all of a tremble, without no light. I didn't know as I could have the courage. But then I'd remembered that it might be Howell's cousin, who's trying to kill that old martin, he told you of."

"Hannah, you've the pluck of the Four Hundred—I mean of the Six Hundred! And it was Ed Howells? Or haven't you found out?"

"Mrs. Howells says that Ed was out with his gun that night; but she don't know if he was hanging round our place so late. She's to find out, and let me know to-morrow. I didn't give her no reason. I don't care to stir up Miss Prior, nor to speak to Miss Leila. I was up and down a good deal last night though; and I suspect Miss Prior hears me, in a way. It may be all some harmless matter—say, Ed Howells. He's harmless enough, Lord knows, the young ninny! But I've been a little worried; and—well—now you know why, Mr. Richard."

Trask had become distinctly thoughtful.

"Right or wrong, Hannah," he answered after a moment, "you've done best to tell nobody of the thing, except me. Nothing happened last night, eh?"

Well, I dare say, I can soon find out the business. Most likely somebody or other from the village, stalking. Lucky he didn't fire off a gun! — you'd have had Miss Prior awfully upset. I'll see what I can learn in town. But don't sit up nights, and don't worry. I've no notion it's a thief. Maybe it's a sleep-walker, or an herb-picker — or a summer-boarder jumping his bill. We'll get hold of the secret presently. Meantime, let's keep it to ourselves, by all means."

The reassurance came with an airy confidence not altogether assumed. Moreover, Richard's gallant convictions, at any time, on the propriety of turning the other sex from serious, not to say unattractive, topics of thought, were strong. But Hannah's story had impressed him. He did not like it; not for Miss Prior's sake, not for Leila's. He would hunt up Ed Howell, at once. He would ask the constable if any equivocal types had been drifting into Castro lately. Something mischievous might be toward, even in tranquil, hum-drum Castro!

But just now he must keep such fancies for his own use, surely! He sauntered to the window, and was looking out on the sunny path of the garden, as Leila came in, with two large pairs of scizzors, and an empty basket of generous size; evidently with her mind mind set for an early start toward the Lighthouse Woods. In half an hour, the pair were on their way to Anna Trask, and to the morning's woodland errand.

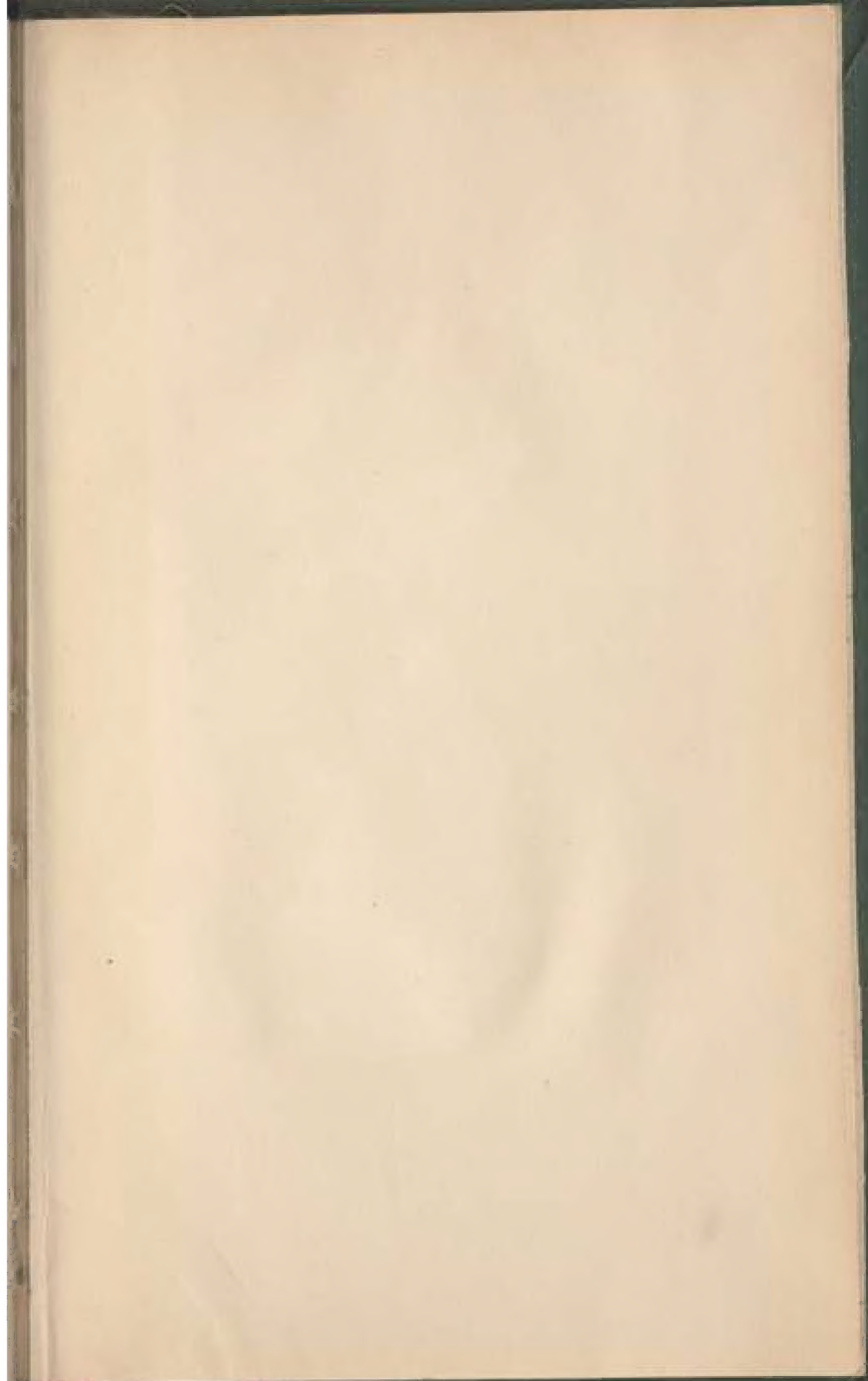
(At this point, the story was discontinued.)











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